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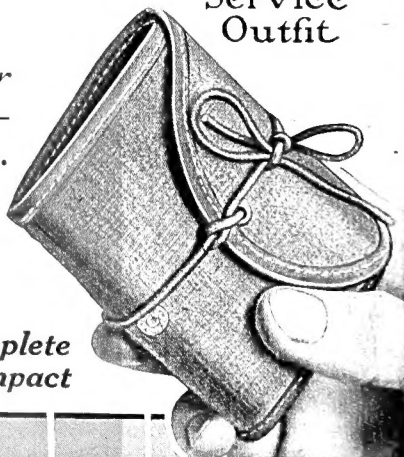
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Adventure

JANUARY 18, 1919



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NO. 2

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(Continued on next page)

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Adventure

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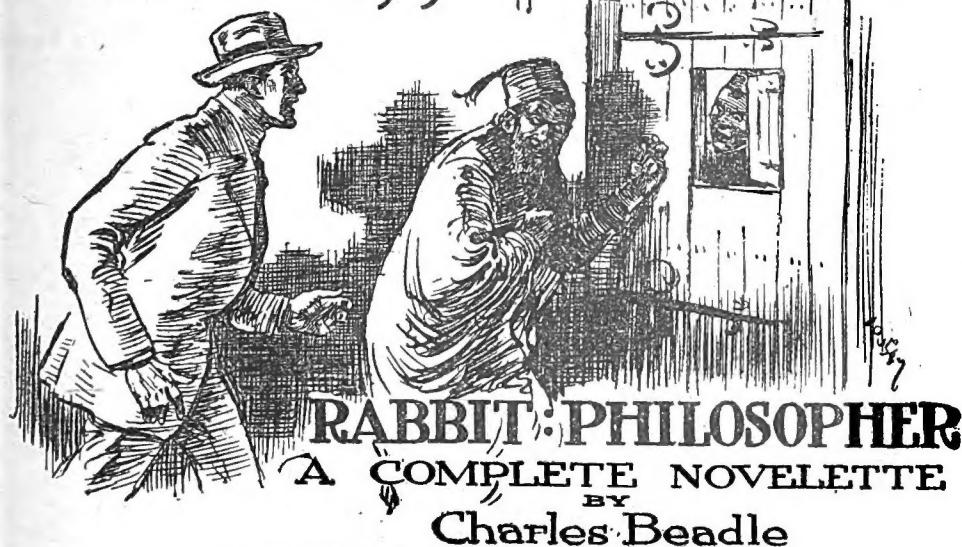
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Author of "The Winged Avenger," "The Black Lure," etc.

THE eddying crowd in the Soko Chiko was tinted with the reflection of the rose-glow of sunset. Jostling in half a dozen different directions between the Café de l'Univers and the Spanish post-office opposite, Moors in their white and blue *sil-hams* with gleams of red above the *rozzaks*; tribesmen from the Riff, rope turbans and flicks of gay ribbons attached to their gray *jellaba*; Jews in their somber black gabardines and pill-box caps; here and there the incongruous coat, trousers and straw hat of a European; surged, swayed, fought their way against a stream of supercilious camels stalking rhythmically from the port and a line of donkeys issuing stubbornly from the Street of the Pastry Makers.

Through this swirling mass of color came to complicate the traffic a notable upon a

fat mule in crimson saddlery, a big black slave in front bawling: "*Balaaki! Balaaki!* Make way!" and above the clamor of a dozen tongues and dialects floated the call to prayer from an adjacent mosque, clear, wailing tones floating lazily above the turmoil, suggestive of mystery.

Then from the street from the port burst into the throng packed tight by the passage of the notable, a figure in white linen as boisterous as he was mighty-thewed, towering above the crowd like a camel in a herd of mules. Harsh, guttural curses sounded in his wake, elbows jabbed backward with energy; hawk-nosed tribesmen scowled menacingly at the imperious manner of this infidel.

He reached as far as the front line of the mob pressing back for a line of mules burdened with the white-hooded figures of

women, and with a mighty great "*phew*" of disgust and heat, took off his panama to wipe his forehead, revealing as carrot-y a head as any Irishman ever wore.

As he stood watching impatiently a voice beneath his elbow remarked in a caricature of 'varsity English—

"Hullo, ole chap, where you going, whaat?"

"What the devil!" exclaimed Hayes, looking around for the curious phenomenon.

"Here I am, ole chap," added the voice complacently.

And glancing down he beheld a Moor, a creature clad in a gray *jellab* which was half over one shoulder revealing soiled crimson clothes beneath; a crumpled fez cap was stuck rakishly on a half-shaven head over a yellow, flat face decorated with moth-eaten whiskers around a gash of a mouth, a snub nose and brown intelligent eyes, a face which expanded in a grin like a rubber balloon.

"What on earth are you?" demanded Hayes.

"Me? You?" repeated the caricature, placidly discovering a tab of a cigaret from the folds of his robes. "Me guide, sir; show you dancin' girl, ole chap, 'strawd-in'ry girl, fren' of Rabbit, yessir."

"Rabbit!" Hayes' laugh sounded like a bellow of a good-natured bull. "For the love of Augustus Henry who told you you were a lepus?"

"Pus?" echoed the man quizzically.

"Rabbit, you wall-headed idiot!"

"Me Rabbit," repeated Rabbit firmly. "Ev'rybody know Rabbit. Rabbit known Rock. Rabbit known Algeciras. Rabbit known—all over the world. Fust-class guide, ole chap. Rabbit show you dancin' gir——"

"Oh, go to Aden! When the devil's this Fifth Avenue show going to get by!"

"Oh, plenty time," volunteered Rabbit. "He very big person: most 'portant. Plenty wives. I say, ole chap," hopelessly, "you come—an'—have—a—drink?"

"By the living lord of waters, that's the wisest word you ever said," exclaimed Hayes, wiping his brow and looking 'round.

"You come along, ole chap!"

Rabbit edged from the crowd and swaggered with a roll like a seaman to the terrace of the Café de l'Univers. In a chair he lounged elegantly, imparting in some extraordinary way an air of solemn dignity

to his slightest movement utterly incongruous to the *Katzenjammer* face.

"I have an absinth," he remarked cordially. "Green devil o' France, whaat?"

"The devil you will!" exclaimed Hayes laughing, but nevertheless he ordered the drinks.

He looked Rabbit up and down curiously.

"Where did you come from?"

"Me?" With a vague air of surprise. "I come from Riff. I Riff man. These bally insect's no 'count." He waved an imperious brown hand. Hayes vented another roar at the inimitable accent of "these bally insect's." "Where you come from?"

"Where do I come from? Well, I guess I come from a little State called Colorado."

"Ah, you Mexican. I know. That's why. I say, yessir! I speak all languages."

"You're a peach, you're a plum, you're the limit!" Hayes remarked smiling. "I've wandered this wide little earth of ours but never did I see your equal. Did the Lord ever make another like you, I wonder?"

"No," said Rabbit quite solemnly.

Hayes roared with delighted laughter.

"What's your proper name, anyway?"

"Ana Rabat ibn Busselham el Hero."

The words rolled out with majestic aspirations at which somehow Hayes could not laugh.

"Where you goin'?" added Rabbit relapsing to his usual manner as Hayes lighted a cigaret.

"I'm going up country," said Hayes indulgently.

"You want guide? I fust-class guide, dragoman, cook, hunter, fightin' man."

"Why not add philosopher to your accomplishments?" queried Hayes.

"Osopher?"

"Where did you learn English?"

"My fren', Lefttenant Rolly, he teach me. Awf'ly jolly, whaat? He live at Rock; fightin' man same as me. Always he come here shootin'. Always his fren' Rabbit; no bally insect's. I say, you want good 'osopher?"

"I certainly do sometimes," said Hayes laughing, seeing clearly the English subaltern in Rabbit's mimicry.

"All right, ole chap. Fifty *douro* (Moorish dollars) a week and food. All right, ole chap. Now you give me ten *douro* 'cos I'm awf'ly bally short, ole chap."

"Of all the roughnecks!" murmured

Hayes, vastly amused. "I haven't engaged you yet!"

"That's all right, ole chap," asserted Rabbit easily, waving a deprecatory hand. "If you want ref'rence you call, see my fren' Rolly; he give you full 'formation. He intimate fren' o' mine. Yessir!"

Hayes sprawled back in his chair playing with his hat and regarded the man.

"You're so darned funny, I've half a mind to," said he meditatively. "You're all thieves and liars so I'd best have an amusing one to rob me." He chuckled. "You seem fairly intelligent even if your face is like a diseased potato gone to seed."

"Just like you, ole chap. You head pum'kin, whaat?"

This was a flick on the tenderest spot in the giant's anatomy. Scalps of would-be bestowers of "Ginger" and "Carrots" had strewed the path of the years since school days. He sat up as if he had received a galvanic shock. Rabbit raised the calmest brown eyes in the world from the delicate flicking of his cigaret. Hayes' mouth opened in a roar of laughter.

"By the left hind leg of the sacred cat of Colorado!" he exclaimed, bringing down a relaxed fist upon the table. "I like you!"

"All right, ole chap," assured Rabbit nonchalantly. "I like you! Now you give me ten *douros*!"

Meekly as a kitten, Hayes handed over the money.

"Now, Rabbit, you'll come up to my hotel tomorrow and take over my things."

"Let's have another drink, ole chap," said Rabbit languidly, "to moisten the business."

"Moisten!" echoed Hayes. "I guess you mean I'll buy you another drink."

"When Rabbit ask his fren' have a drink his fren' have a drink with Rabbit. I Riff man."

The words were drawled and yet had a curious authoritative air that made Hayes stare again. An angry retort rose, but he was too widely traveled not to know that a Moor is not necessarily negroid, that the Riff tribes were supposed to be descended from the Greeks; indeed whenever Rabbit happened to thrust his bare arm beyond the sleeve of the *jellab* the elbow was almost as white as his own Celtic skin.

As they sat watching the drip of the water turn the liquid to opalescent jewels, a man at a nearby table caught Hayes'

attention by the fact that he held a small nondescript dog in his lap. He wore a cap like an artisan's, a pepper-and-salt suit, and a red tie; the face, as he turned into the light of the windows, was abnormally long, like a hatchet; had small eyes and a blond toothbrush mustache. Hayes asked Rabbit who this curiosity was.

"Oh, her?" said Rabbit in a slightly contemptuous tone after looking. "Sid-el-Keleeb—he master of the liddle dog, ole chap, 'cos he always carry that liddle dog."

Rabbit bored one temple with a forefinger which inferred that the man was crazy.

"Curious beast," commented Hayes. "He looks like a cross between a gunman and a Broadway lizard."

"Lizard?" repeated Rabbit as habitually. "He no lizard. He bad man all same Raisuli" (a notorious bandit).

"He is!" commented Hayes, looking at the man again. "He doesn't look as if he had the sand. Why, he's quite a little rat."

"Rat? He bad rat; bite like rat; run like rat; fight like rat. Yessir!"

"Well he don't look it then! Come along and we'll go up to the hotel."

"You no go see dancing girl? Fren' Rabbit? She 'strawdin'ry! Awf'ly jolly!"

"Keep your head shut. I'm going along," answered Hayes irritably, who was hungry for his dinner.

Rabbit stared at him calmly. Then he enunciated quietly:

"Oh, you liver dambad, ole chap! All right. I see you here after, whaat?"



HAYES strode on and up the comparatively clear streets. He was both amused with Rabbit and annoyed at other things. He had been six months in Siberia examining reputed oil-mines and another seven in Spain after coal, and then just as he was waiting at Gibraltar for a boat for the States, a cable had sent him to Morocco to report on an oil-spring and if good, to obtain a concession from the Sultan.

He had been in many parts of northern Africa before, so spoke a bit of Arabic as well as other tongues picked up in a mining engineer's life in the four quarters of the globe. However, after dinner he felt in a better humor and being a gregarious animal and finding only a bunch of anemic tourists at the hotel, he strode down again to the café.

Rabbit was not there which annoyed him. He was in a mood when he wished to be amused and with "Mad Jack" Hayes wishes were likely to be imperious. The stranger with the dog was seated a few tables away. As idly he sipped his drink Hayes noted the hatchet face and the hard small mouth and jaw.

"An ugly little rat in a scrap," he commented. "I wonder what he's up to now?"

A melodious "Goo' even', ole chap," announced the arrival of his "'osopher." Hayes turned. Rabbit stood leaning magnificently by one hand upon a chair back; a cigar was in his mouth and a very large beam upon his face.

"Sit down!" commanded Hayes.

"Yessir!" Rabbit straightened up, eyed the selected chair calculatingly and gracefully slid into it.

"You're drunk!" said Hayes, half-amused.

"Drunk?" Rabbit's head wagged as solemnly and as persistently as a china mandarin. "No, ole chap. 'Toxicated. 'Toxicated! 'Briated, p'raps. My fren', I'm gennelman; not bally insecc'!"

"I tell you you're drunk! If you get drunk when you're working for me you get fired—quick! Understand?"

"No sir, I never drunk!" waving an expostulated hand. "'Cep' sometimes. 'Cos sometimes awf'ly good get drunk." Then he peered into Hayes' face. "You never get drunk?"

"No, of course not," said Hayes, trying to hide his smile.

Again wagged the head commiseratingly.

"Ah, all wise men say get drunk 'casion'ly. I'm wise. Yessir. Awf'ly jolly get drunk 'casion'ly, awf'ly jolly!"

"Look here, Rabbit, you pull yourself together, understand?"

"All right, ole chap," aggrievedly. "*Gar-çoni! Gar-çoni!*"

A large paw flapped at Hayes like a fin as Rabbit whispered in the ear of the waiter who grinned, and presently returned with a bottle of Worcestershire sauce which Rabbit half-emptied into a tumbler, swallowed in two gulps and spluttered. Hayes watched him amusedly. Nearly every guide the world over was a drunkard. Hayes saw that he would have to sack this amusing specimen before they even got under way; better than finding out later, he reflected. After a spell of spluttering, blinking and

rubbing his throat Rabbit coughed and said.

"Now, my fren', I am no longer 'toxicated, thanks to medicine o' my fren' Rolly. To please you, ole chap, I will—will not drink—so much. Yessir! You want be 'mused?"

"Mused? Oh yes, but what's there to do in——"

"You come see dancin' girl, ole chap. Awf'ly jolly, 'strawdin'ry."

"Oh, I've seen all the dancing girls from Madrid to Pekin and they're all the same."

"No, my fren', ole chap, Rabbit dancin' girl 'strawdin'ry. Yessir!" He rose. Hayes watched him critically, but his actions appeared perfectly sober. "You come 'long, my fren'. Nothin' do here among all these bally insecc's."

"Oh, all right," agreed Hayes as he called his waiter.

With faultless balance of step Rabbit led the way across the Soko and up the dark lane toward the big market, but half way up he turned aside into a pitch-dark alley.

"Where are you going?" demanded Hayes.

"All right, ole chap," came Rabbit's voice in the velvet darkness. "You no be 'fraid. Rabbit wit' you."

"Darn your ugly soul," growled the Irishman, half laughing.

Through winding lanes where his long arms could touch each side, he followed Rabbit, twisting in and about the native maze. At last when Hayes thought that they must be in the Kasbah (old native quarter) Rabbit began to pound upon a wicket door let in a blank wall. Growly noises sounded within. Rabbit spoke hard gutturals in response; then after the creak and moan of the door a great black negro scanned them in the light of a lantern.

"Give shillin' this bally insecc'," whispered Rabbit.

Hayes handed the guardian a *peseta*, and followed Rabbit up very narrow, smelly and winding stairs, worn and slippery, toward the sound of wailing violins. Then a door opened revealing by the light of a swinging kerosene lamp a large room with grimy white-washed walls crowded with Moors and Berbers. Not a European was to be seen in the crowd. Bright black eyes over hawk noses peered up at them as Rabbit made a way to stools set against the opposite wall.

At the top of the room under great white arches was a low stage upon which squatted a row of Jewish musicians in their black robes; some were bearded like patriarchs and others were fresh-skinned boys; all clutched violins which they sawed between the knees, cello fashion. To one side was a bunch of dancers clad in flimsy muslin stuffs colored and covered with sequins and beads. About the room moved young Arabs with tiny glasses of black coffee and tall ones of Moorish tea.



AS RABBIT ordered two coffees the music rose from the wailing into a quick rhythm and one of the girls came forward to the edge of the platform with a weary movement and began the usual posturing to be seen in any café in the near or far East. Hayes became impatient and bored. But Rabbit whispered to his grumble:

"All right, ole chap, you wait. Him no good. Bally insec'. But Ramah! 'Strawdin'ry, ole chap, 'strawdin'ry!"

While the girl stretched and shuffled and wriggled, Hayes took stock of the crowd.

"A pretty collection of roughnecks by the look of them," he reflected.

Hillmen with gaunt, tanned faces and fierce eyes of a hawk gravely sipped coffee and regarded the show imperturbably. The band wailed to a finish and the girl retired to the corner.

"Now him Ramah!" whispered Rabbit.

Hayes saw a girl, apparently about fifteen, slender to gauntness, clad in a filmy veil which fell from her nose to her knees beneath which could be seen the beads and spangles of a stomacher and breast-harness; her hair was black and straggly, and the features more or less ordinary except for the eyes which were large and exceptionally bright.

"Nothing to make a song about!" muttered Hayes and turned away at the stir of a newcomer.

The hatchet-faced stranger entered with the dog in his arms and stood leaning against the wall with his eyes on the dancer, a queer incongruous figure amid the sea of fierce eyes and robes. Hayes turned to the stage. The girl was dancing to a slumberous wail of the Jewish orchestra, swaying and posing, yet with grace and languor. He watched with more interest.

Then suddenly the band changed to a

higher key with a quick blood beat. The girl began to pirouette, floating the draperies about her figure; whirled as the rhythm increased. Faster sped the band, swifter flew the slender figure. Then as abruptly as the music ceased, the girl stopped on tip-toe; she posed rigid with arms upheld as a snaky shudder ran from her throat to her ankles. Again the band worked up in crescendo to cease while the dancer posed.

Again and again this was repeated, the movement became faster and faster each time until the musicians were sawing like frantic demons and the girl seemed lost in a whirling mist of moonlight. At the sixth time the snaky undulations were convulsive. She collapsed upon the floor in a heap.

The staring bright eyes of the audience and the shower of gutturals expressed the adulation. Hayes carried away by the dance forgot his environment and clapped his hands; then stared in momentary amazement at the waiter before him. Recollecting that to clap was a summons, he covered his *faux pas* by ordering more coffees as Rabbit whispered:

"Quick, he come! You give money. Gold money on forehead, you know!"

Down through the crowd of robed men came the girl, her black eyes luminous, straight toward Hayes who knowing the Arabic custom drew out a ten-franc piece and as the girl knelt at his feet, pressed it upon her forehead.

"*Barakoloviki! Barakoloviki!*" she said, smiling radiantly. "I thank thee!"

"*Mahabbikum!*" he replied, smiling. "A thousand times welcome!"

"Aih!" exclaimed Rabbit as she flew back to her place. "You spik Arbaie?"

"Yes, you old sinner, so be careful what you say in front of me!" said Hayes, smiling at Rabbit's amazement. "But that girl can dance better than anything I've ever seen on Broadway," he added.

"Broadway?" echoed Rabbit.

"You don't know New York, you goat, you!"

"Noo York? Oah, I live on Rock long time," said Rabbit contemptuously. "My fren' Rolly an—"

"Hullo, what's up?"

A gaunt, hawk-nosed young tribesman had suddenly begun to mouth ominous gutturals, glaring at the man with the dog against the wall who regarded him calmly. An echo of murmurs rippled 'round him.

Then as suddenly the figure shot up and as he lunged forward a knife flashed in the glare of the kerosene lamp.

Incredibly swiftly the slight man with the dog slid along the wall, picked up a stool and with one hand still clutching the dog who yapped fiercely, flung it at his assailant, whose knife had met the white-washed wall instead of the stranger's body. In a moment there was an uproar of yells and curses. The audience rose as one man.

"By holy St. Patrick, there's a scrap! Come on!" roared the Irishman and picking up the stool on which he was sitting, laid a path right and left to the stranger's side who, just as a revolver shot rang out, hit the lamp with a well-aimed stool.

The lamp crashed upon the tiled floor and flared up. In the light the Irishman swung that stool with mighty joy and execution at the sea of faces around them. Shots, oaths, yells and screams above which struggled strange words:

"Bald-faced piker! Ow, you poor fish, you! *Whooroo*, you son of a diseased camel!"

Suddenly the flare of the lamp was stamped out. There was a pause. Then again the general uproar and the shuffling of many feet. A voice at Hayes' elbow whispered frantically in Arabic:

"You come with me! They kill you! You can not fight all!"

The stranger heard the whisper and added—

"Yes, we had better go, sir, before they down us with numbers!"

Swiftly Hayes realized that there was truth in the advice. There were quite sixty or more men present and they had had by this time plenty to get their blood up. The pause was ominous. The guttural whisperers were evidently organizing for a final rush. Hayes hated to leave a perfectly good scrap, but when he assented the stranger halted and murmured audibly:

"*Kismell! Kismell! Ou es tu? Vienst Kismell!*"

"Oh, darn your dog!" muttered Hayes as he clutched the man's arm.

"*Ach!*" came an exclamation as a whine answered him.

With warm tiny fingers on his wrist Hayes followed his guide, the stranger holding in the dark to his sleeve in turn. At a few paces along the wall his head brushed a curtain and then he stumbled upon a step,

the first of a winding series which led to an uneven floor and another set which brought them suddenly in the cool air under the stars.

AS HAYES peered he recognized the dancer Ramah beside whom stood the slight figure of the stranger, crooning to the dog in his arms.

"Sir," said he standing very erect as Hayes turned toward him, "allow me to offer my sincere thanks for your timely aid."

The accent was pure; even the stiff phraseology might have been uttered by a pedantic professor.

"Oh, that's all right," said Hayes. "I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was bully!"

"*Ach!*" The guttural was of the slightest. "You are then an American."

"I am."

"You will permit me to introduce myself as I can not discover a card in the dark here. My name is de Bouche, Baron Sigismund de Bouche, and again I thank you, sir!"

"Oh, that's all right," said Hayes, rather impatient at the formal bow of the figure in the gloom. "My name's Hayes, Jack Hayes. I'm a mining engineer. But what about this kid here! She brought us out I think," with a laugh, "or they'd have got us in the end!"

He bent over to Ramah, and said in broken Arabic—

"I thank you very much, little one." Then feeling in his pocket he thrust a bundle of notes into her hand. "You buy yourself something good," he added in English.

But to his surprise the notes fluttered to the ground as the girl's voice said—

"I am a daughter of the hills!"

"Well I'll be darned for a Dutchman!" exclaimed Hayes as her figure melted into the shadows of the stair house.

"'Strawdin'ry! 'Strawdin'ry!" agreed a familiar voice at his elbow. "What did I tell you, ole chap? 'Strawdin'ry person."

"Where did you get to?" demanded Hayes, turning on Rabbit.

"To? I help my damfool fren' not get killed by Moor man," explained Rabbit lucidly.

Hayes roared.

"You did like smoke! You ran away, you cuttle-fish, you!"

"I go fetch Ramah find way out," said

Rabbit patiently. "Moor man 'strawdin'ry fightin' man. You damfool stay long'nough you get killed. Yessir! Afterwards when you go I stop for liddle fight for myself. Very nice."

"Oh," Hayes recollected that Rabbit had been fighting, had disappeared, and then some one unknown had apparently held back a rush when they were leaving the café.

"By holy St. Patrick, you're right, Rabbit! Did you get hurt?"

"'Cep' for 'cisions of the arm and 'brasion on my nose made by these bally insec's I am quite all right," said Rabbit loftily, revealing the blade of a scimitar as he stowed it away beneath his robes. "Come-an'-have-a-drink, ole chap, whaat?"

"Great idea!" assented Hayes laughing. "Baron, will you join me?"

"I shall have great pleasure, sir," assented the baron.

II



UPON further acquaintance Hayes lost his contempt for the "little rat."

He certainly could scrap, as Hayes had seen, and afterward he had proved one of the most amusing raconteurs that he had ever encountered. They had a good basis of fellowship in the fact that both men knew the wild places of the earth, the baron having seen service in Borneo and Sumatra, rambled 'round the interior of China, and walked through Asia to Paris.

Hayes, like many men who have seen the world in unusual moods, was rather loath to tell anecdotes lest he be put down as a gifted liar; in fact urged by this feeling he often became one deliberately, chuckling for a day at the victim who had swallowed the medicine, and then revenging himself by telling some true tale which he knew sounded like a yarn to the uninitiated and enjoyed the incredulous look of the victim.

So that to him in his experience he could hear the ring of truth in the baron's stories. Another topic of mutual interest was the foil, of which the baron apparently was a master. Hayes during a long sojourn in Paris had taken many lessons from a French master noted in his early days as a duellist whom the baron knew. They talked fencing until the shutters were put up at 2 A.M.

Next morning Rabbit arrived most

punctually and very solemnly received his instructions to set about obtaining animals and men. After breakfast when Hayes had finished scribbling some letters in the coffee lounge, the baron strolled in, of course with his dog. On the previous evening or rather morning, he had revealed no curiosity about Hayes' personal affairs. But after relating as a great joke that the owner of the dance-house had been seized by the governor and thrown into jail, he ventured to inquire whether Hayes intended to stay long in Tangier. Hayes answered that he hoped to get away in a few days for the interior.

The baron expressed surprise as he said that he had imagined that Hayes had come over for pig sticking, a favorite sport with the Gibraltar military. Then said Hayes in return—

"Are you a resident here, Baron?"

"Oh, no," responded the baron. "I am but a bird of passage. I am leaving for Fez too as soon as I can get men and animals. Very difficult at this season you will find as they are all busy with the harvest." He smiled and stroked his thin nose. "If you would care to, we might travel together, Mr. Hayes? Apart from the pleasure of your society, company is always advisable if possible upon the road in this country, particularly between here and Alkazar Kebir which is, as you may know, the favorite hunting ground of our notorious friend Raisuli and his imitators."

"Sure," agreed Hayes, "why not? I am quite a gregarious animal and should enjoy your company. But by the way, I'm not going quite as far as Fez—at least not yet; but that will be at least three-fourths of the way. Are you in mining by any chance?"

"I? Oh, no," said the baron blandly. "My venture here is purely commercial. I have some friends who are putting in capital with me to build a large hotel in Paris in the Moorish style, and I am going to Fez to get the genuine Fez tiles, which are made nowhere else in the world. The coloring is magnificent, almost as wonderful as the mediaeval windows of Notre Dame de Paris and Oxford in England. I have an idea to buy if possible a tile factory there to turn out the tiles in modern quantities with the ancient workmanship."

"Very interesting," said Hayes. "Sounds quite like an American idea. I hope you get all you want."

"I thank you, sir," answered the baron. "But you know—perhaps you are like me as you have traveled so much," he interpolated with a smile, "something of a fatalist? Always to me it is as the Arabs say, *Mektoob*—'written,' you know. *Kismet* is another word with a slightly different meaning to which I rather incline, hence my friend here." He caressed the nondescript dog.

"Yes, you seem mighty fond of that animal."

"He is the only thing for whom I care," said the baron gravely. "You must know," in answer to an inquisitive look in the Irishman's face, "that on one of my little ventures—in the South—I found myself stranded in the desert, wounded, without arms or food or water. As a matter of fact I was doomed to die by thirst by my gentle friends down there with whom I had had—a misunderstanding." He smiled. "And there in the sun, parched and feeble, I thought that indeed my end was to come, but *mein Liebchen* here came out of infinity—sent by Allah, you know—and led me to water. That is *Kismet*! And that is why I gave him that name; and why I am called *Sid-el-Keleeb*."

"Ah, yes," said Hayes; "I had heard the name. My dragoman happened to tell me last night."

"Ach, that Rabat!" The mouth tightened slightly. "I would give you a little advice, Mr. Hayes, as a stranger in this place: get rid of that fellow as soon as possible. All guides are thieves and liars, but this man is the worst of any of them."

"He seems fairly honest as they go," returned Hayes, vaguely resenting the slur upon Rabbit's character, "and certainly he is very amusing."

"Ach, *qu'est-ce-que vous voulez?* It is his *metier*—his business—to be amusing, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"Oh, I like him," said Hayes obstinately. "If I catch him trying to put it over, as we say in the States, I'll take the hide off him and he knows it."

"As you will," said the baron indulgently. "But he is too clever to give you the chance. Only a fool does that, and this fellow is not that. Oh, no."

"Do you know anything against him particularly, Baron?"

"I? Oh, I have never had dealings with the man, but every one's reputation is

known in this country from one end to the other."

At that moment a servant approached with a green envelope for Hayes. He tore open the cable, apologizing perfunctorily to the baron.

Information Mannesmann after concession hurry beware agents.

KIRBY.

Kirby was the principal of his firm in New York and was not given to imaginative messages. The Mannesmann Brothers he knew of as a wealthy German firm heavily subsidized by the Imperial Government. He grunted, half with satisfaction, for the idea of a competitive race for the prize stimulated his flagging interest in the prosaic oil-well. But he crumpled up the missive and thrust it into his vest pocket with a muttered but audible "darned idiots," and glanced at the baron, who was as usual caressing the dog.

Was the baron an agent of this firm? But—he had seemed frank enough. Was his information sound regarding Rabbit, who might be an agent, or one of the agents' tools? He knew well that the Mannesmann Brothers would stick at nothing where their manifold interests were concerned.

"I beg your pardon, Baron," he continued, smiling, "but these fools who sit at home are always worrying one with unimportant and foolish questions. Will you have an *aperitif?*"

 IN THE afternoon trouble commenced. Rabbit arrived and remarked nonchalantly that no animals could be obtained.

"Why not?" snapped Hayes.

"'Cos these bally insect's want make the harvest, you know, ole chap, an' three big caravans have gone out this week. Yes-sir."

Hayes lighted a cigar and reflected. This seemed likely to be the Mannesmann agent's doing. But who was he? Was Rabbit in their pay? This was just as the baron had intimated. He apparently was having the same difficulty.

That put the baron out of the running; otherwise he wouldn't have wanted to accompany him at any price; his policy would have been to balk Hayes for animals and clear off himself to get as big a start as possible. He looked at Rabbit lounging

in an arm-chair smoking a cigaret with the air of a grand duke.

"Well, what you think is the cons'quence, ole chap?" he demanded blandly.

Hayes laughed in spite of himself.

"You're going to get the mules, Rabbit, and quick about it. *Fahamshi?*"

"As we gennelman say, if Allah wills!"

"If you're going to begin talking that tarnation dope——"

Hayes sprang to his feet and grabbed his hat.

"Where you go, ole chap, whaat?" demanded Rabbit languidly.

"Never your mind. You stop here and keep your head shut."

"Certainly. Yessir. I 'bserve you're lef' me some cigarets. Allah be with you! We see what come out of him!"

"Dern the wall-eyed clown! I can't believe he's a spy!" muttered Hayes as he made his way to the American Consulate chuckling.

Of the vice-consul he asked whether he knew of anything of the man Rabbit—Rabat ibn Busselham, a guide.

"No, I guess I don't," responded the young New Englander.

Hayes described Rabbit but with no result, for the consul had not long been out. He stated his difficulty and urgent need of men and animals and demanded—Hayes had a trick of demanding—aid, explaining what lay behind the affair.

"Sure," said the consul. "I'll get Mohammed, the dragoman, on the job and he'll scare up a bunch or my name's not Holt!"

Hayes returned to the hotel intending to send Rabbit out again to hunt men as well. But when he arrived he found the baron installed.

"Forgive me, Mr. Hayes," said he, "but I have learned from your dragoman here that, as I believe I suggested, you have found difficulty in obtaining animals."

"I have," Hayes admitted, sinking into a chair.

"Well, fortunately I have been able to secure both men and animals. You see I have been working hard for them for nearly a month, but the Moorish temperament is not conducive to speed. And as it happens I have the offer of enough men to supply us both. If you care to have them I shall be honored."

"Now, that's fine!" exclaimed Hayes.

"Of course I will and derved glad to have the chance."

The baron undertook to make the necessary arrangements and left, promising to meet Hayes at the hotel for dinner. No sooner had he gone than Rabbit wandered in.

"Here, Rabbit," said Hayes as soon as he saw him, "you waltz up to the American Consulate and tell the consul he needn't bother about those derved animals and men."

"You go 'long Sid-el-Keleeb?" demanded Rabbit.

"Yes. He's done more than you could. He's got enough animals and men for both of us."

Rabbit leaned languidly against the table and blew smoke gracefully.

"You go 'long that bally inse' you big damfool," stated Rabbit as one not to be contradicted.

"What d'you mean, you green baboon?"

"Mohammed great man; he say words made to speak. I speak, Pum'kin."

Rabbit spoke with such portentous solemnity that Hayes laughed uproariously.

"Look here, if you go that road, Rabbit I'll take the hide of you."

"Hide?" placidly interested. "Whaat is hide?"

"You'll find out quicker'n a flea can hop," laughed Hayes, "if you call me names."

"Names? You call me green baboon? Not very nice. I call you pum'kin. Why not, ole chap?"

"Oh, my lordy!" gasped Hayes. "You'll kill me if I don't kill you! Now see here, Rabbit, be serious!"

"I am always solemn in every case," asserted Rabbit.

"Can it!" commanded Hayes shaking.

"Now explain why I'm a —— fool?"

"Damfool? You?" drawled Rabbit thoughtfully.

"Allah only knows."

"Rabbit, as you hope for paradise and a thousand houris, answer my question seriously. Why do you say that the baron is a bad man?"

"All man know. Ask wild man from Rifi, ask wild man from Sus! Allah make funny men like that."

"He sure does!" said Hayes chuckling. "Have you had a row with the baron or not?"

"Baron he still speak and stroll about?" inquired Rabbit blandly.

"You evidently fancy yourself as a gunman, huh?"

"Gunman? What gunman?"

"A — thief like you!"

"Thief? I thief? Yessir. All men thief, but I never steal from my fren'."

"I said you were a philosopher!"

"'Osopher? Yessir. You go 'long baron?"

"Of course I am. If I didn't I'd be stuck here for a month o' Labor Days!"

"Damfool once, damfool twice; damfool always. As Allah wills. Yessir."

"Get out!"

"We see what come out of him! I go consul. Yessir."



THE baron was good as his word. He arrived at *aperetif* time with the definite offer, of more men and animals than his host needed.

"This," reflected Hayes, "cuts out a chance of this fellow being an agent of Mannesmann. But how about Rabbit? He might be a local Machiavelli. Queer, that he should have been so keen about winging the baron. Sounds as if—h'm. I'll keep him. He's amusing and better perhaps to have him under my eye."

The baron was particularly entertaining that evening. Kismet of course had to be provided with a chair and fed, on tit-bits from his master's plate, much to the Greek proprietor's indignation, who fussed but dared not protest. Even the anemic tourists thought audibly that Kismet was a darling; a word which took the adjective "perfect" upon learning that his master was a real baron.

After dinner there being nothing else to do in Tangier the two adjourned to the café. Rabbit appeared in a new *jellab*, but still worn in his habitual fashion as if falling from his shoulders. Whether the baron ignored Rabbit or Rabbit ignored the baron, Hayes could not tell; but throughout the evening Rabbit addressed his wisdom to Hayes. By scarcely as much as an inflection of voice did either reveal that he was aware of the other's presence; although the baron failed for he implied most subtly that he would not be seen in the company of such an odious creature save in deference to the idiosyncrasies of his host.

The longer the comedy continued the more positive Hayes became that the two had met before. Two more days passed in this manner. Rabbit never referred again to the baron, and the baron never mentioned Rabbit. On the third morning at sunrise the two caravans left the grand Soko and wound over the red hills on the road to the Gharb.

Hayes bestrode a black-maned stallion powerful enough to take his weight, to which he had taken a fancy in the Soko one morning, and which he soon discovered to have water on the knee, the usual failing of Moorish horses caused by propping in the eternal Powder Play. The baron sedately rode a fat mule after the style of the merchant, with Kismet comfortably ensconced in an absurd kennel on the cumbersome red pommel, Master-of-the-little-dog indeed. They rode in the van; behind them came Rabbit perched upon a weedy horse carrying a pack-saddle large and flat enough for a circus hoop performer's turn, and fat panniers from which stuck a fringe of cooking utensils.

At about eleven they stopped for a snack which Rabbit superintended with the air of a grand chef. After a smoke they mounted and plodded steadily down a valley between fairly high hills covered, as a carpet, with radiant flowers. As Hayes was in the middle of a story of Sumatra told to beguile the time, the rattle of pots and pans distracted him. Rabbit arrived alongside by the process of sticking his mount in the neck with a prong provided for that purpose.

"You see wild men, ole chap?" he queried.

"Wild men! What the sinful Lucifer are you talking about?" demanded Hayes.

Airily Rabbit waved a cigaret toward the slope of the hills to their right where a bunch of horsemen was riding toward them.

"Wild men!" said he. "They come pull your nose and cons'quently you lose it."

"Punk!" said Hayes laughing. "You're going to see wild men in every derved soul riding to market. Get behind, you ridiculous idiot!"

"'Diculous? All right, my fren', ole chap! Damfool once; damfool two times. We see what come out of him!"

Left untouched his nag quickly fell behind. Hayes continued his story. The tribesmen on the hill slope drew nearer.

Hayes heard a commotion behind. He turned in his saddle. The whole line of pack-horses and the few mules were jogging along in a line off the track urged at extra speed by their riders and drivers.

"What the Augustus Henry is that idiot of mine doing!" exclaimed Hayes, reining in.

"I have told you that the man is a fool," said the baron, pulling up likewise.

The "urrrrghs" of the drivers sounded gutturally on the still air. The caravan clanked and clattered nearer. Rabbit, jabbing at his steed ferociously, bumped alongside at Hayes' call.

"Damfool once!" was Rabbit's answer to Hayes' crude inquiry. "You no see wild men, ole chap?"

"Wild men be derved, you infernal lopsided scarecrow! What the Columbus Henry Lincoln d'you mean by getting the caravan all over the countryside? The derved crocks won't do five miles a day if you worry 'em off their sticks! The Lord and Colonel Roosevelt only knows how they'll ever get to Alcazar as it is!"

"You—you—'dicolous idjit!" yelled Rabbit, pointing. "Look!"

Almost simultaneously three shots rang out and the peculiar whirr of slug shot sounded close to Hayes' head. For the first time he obeyed Rabbit's injunction in a hurry. He saw galloping furiously toward them the bunch of about a half-dozen Moors, their long guns silhouetted against the blue sky, and on one side the figure of the baron from over whose raised arm a white smoke spurted. The next moment Hayes, yelling like a joyous Comanche, was upon them. The crowd divided to the right and left. His automatic spat. He saw a horse and rider go down.

But his brute bolted. Hayes' great strength upon the snaffle bit which he had substituted for the cruel Moorish curb, failed to hold the beast who, excited by the shots and trained to the Powder Play, galloped madly on. By the time he had turned the brute, the shots had ceased. He came back at a gallop, furious to see two groups riding off for all they were worth on each side of the trail, and in the rear the estimable Rabbit before a crowd of jabbering drivers and their animals, mounting a red-saddled gray horse.

"You missed your man too," remarked the baron, irritatingly calm, as he looked up

from soothing his scared pet. "He got away double-banked. There's his horse."

He indicated the dead animal lying off the trail. As Hayes swore explosively Rabbit, still smoking and holding a silver-handled scimitar, cantered alongside upon his barb, a splendid beast.

"Where I get him?" echoed Rabbit. "Wild man stop to give me present! There wild man. He so tired cons'quently he sleep!"

Following almost involuntarily Rabbit's gesture Hayes saw one of the Moors, his red turban like a splash of blood in the field of flowers. Rabbit had gotten his man. For a moment Hayes was speechless. Then he looked longingly after the retreating horsemen and laughed.

"You got me!" he admitted. "But, Rabbit, take off this derved snaffle tonight. I'm not going to run any more risks of losing the fun."

"Who 'dicolous now?" demanded Rabbit genially. Then with a covert and significant glance at the baron's back added: "Mohammed wise man. He say words made to speak. Yessir."



HAYES turned his horse and rode on the trail. Presently the baron remarked conversationally—

"These roads are, as I told you, rather dangerous."

"So I see," said Hayes dryly. "But I'll admit that I didn't expect pastimes like this so near to Tangier."

"My dear friend," said the baron, "these people are quite sporting. Raisuli's people took an enterprising traveler for ransom down there on the beach by Harris' house—that villa which you can see from the Marchan."

"Most interesting country," commented Hayes, but he felt "sore," as he remarked to himself, and rather puzzled.

The reference to the baron made by Rabbit had aroused his suspicions. But how the devil he could connect the incident with either man he could not see. The Rabbit had warned him of the "wild men," but then so had the baron before they had left Tangiers. The baron could not have been in league with them, for he had fired; Rabbit could not have been as he had killed his man. Queer. He rode on with wary eyes for other wayfarers, pondering.

They plodded along in silence for some

time. Hayes was vexed with his own perplexity over the problem. Quite possibly, he mused, he was off the track altogether, if neither the baron nor Rabbit were an agent of Mannesmann. Ah! Had the attack been engineered by Mannesmann's agent? That was more likely. And they would probably not have reckoned upon two infidels. That seemed the most likely. He felt a bit more cheerful after that. Whatever Rabbit and the baron were they had "sand," anyway, he decided.

About four they came to a small open village of mud walls and grass roofs. The baron insisted upon camping there as they could obtain plenty of milk and feed, but Rabbit urged Hayes to go on another hour to a walled village. Hayes had much more respect for Rabbit's opinion now, yet he could not see any reason to doubt the baron's advice and also he was tired of riding all day at the walk. He decided to stay. Rabbit said no word and stalked off to superintend the off loading of the animals and the erection of the tents.

The villagers came around the fire bringing milk and eggs. Several wilder-looking people were among them whom the baron told Hayes were hill people on their way to the Sultan's army at Fez. After quite a good dinner Hayes lounged in his camp-chair and stared at the lines of the hills against the brilliant stars, while the baron told amusing stories of Pekin.

About nine o'clock they went to their tents in order to make an extra early start. Hayes felt good when he was tucked up, listening to the chunk of the animals feeding, the twitter of the night.

Somewhere very early he awoke and gazed expectantly through the inverted V of the tent at the moonlight. There was no sign of the dawn breaking. Wondering what had awakened him he noticed a peculiar *clop-clop-clop* and wondered what it could be.

"Oh, I know," he mused sleepily, "the storks. Supposed to be a warning of some one's approach. Mule loose probably.

The next moment he heard a yell. He grabbed his automatic. As he sprang up the tent came down. A blind dive in the direction of the door brought him face down in a tangle of canvas. He struggled furiously as he felt the canvas being dragged and undoubted hands upon his body.

He was turned, kicking and punching

futilely, lifted, and borne away. Gasping and choking with the rough canvas against his lips he felt himself heaved on high, ropes were bound 'round him, forcing his back against something hard and round; then began the lurching movements of an animal galloping.

III



REALIZING the futility of wasting his strength struggling within the tent folds Hayes lay inert. His legs and shoulders sagged from side to side in the air to the motion of the horse. Each moment he imagined that he would roll off. He could not determine whether he was bound or not. A jolt of stopping came, then the smooth motion of walking, the snort of the animal and what he thought he could recognize as the splash of water.

He remembered that below the village was a small river. The continual sagging of the canvas began to rub his nose and lips sore. But half suffocated, he wondered what had happened. Had the others been carried off? If so, for what? Ransom was the first idea in his mind. Was it the plot of the Mannesmann agent? Was Rabbit a prisoner, and the baron? Or had they been killed? As far as he could recognize so indefinite a thing as a yell the warning had come from Rabbit, which would exonerate him. But had it? The voice might have been any Arab's.

Taken by a spasm of anger at the idea of being ignominiously carted off like so many pounds of beef, Hayes gave a sudden convulsive kick with his two legs. He felt himself slip, and wriggled. The hold upon him tightened. He heard a muffled shout—

"Lie quiet, dog!"

Another bound with all his strength brought a blow, deadened by the canvas wrapping upon his head, which nigh stunned him. His lips felt as if they were rubbed raw and his throat seemed full of dust and sand. The difficulty of breathing at all was intensified by the struggles. He lay still fuming internally.

"Like a darned Mazeppa in a movie!" he growled.

The revolver was still clutched in his hand. But he could not move the hand, which was wedged close to his back. He tried to calculate in what direction the

muzzle would be pointing and to make out, from the movement, the anatomy of the horse. At first he had thought that the blow indicated that a man was riding with him but reflection showed him that it might have been given by some one riding alongside.

Yet there had been the sense of a grip tightening. He could feel, at any rate, from the position of the revolver, that he could not, do more than singe himself; and by firing he might, with a stroke of luck, bring down the animal, or even get his man and create enough confusion to get free and put up a fight. He wriggled his finger within the trigger guard and pulled.

The concussion inside the enveloping tent deafened him. He was conscious of a burning sensation and of falling. He pulled again and again. His shoulder struck the ground heavily, he wriggled furiously, aware of the heaving of the animal. The fresh night air smote his lips. He saw vague forms against the stars. He had one hand free—and saw more stars but of a different quality.

Slowly he became aware of something formless and black against greeny gold which gradually developed into a beard sticking out of the hood of a *jellab* against the sunrise. His head throbbed at every motion of the horse. By degrees he made out that he was trussed like a bundle of faggots upon the pommel of a horseman, and he nearly yelled when he perceived that the beard of his captor above him was as red as his own hair!

He thought it was the figment of a nightmare. He blinked. But the beard was there red as gold in the first rays of the sun.

"By the holy mother of Saint Patrick!" he gasped.

His captor heard the smothered noise and looked down. Hayes saw gray-green eyes and a slightly tilted nose.

"By Allah!" said the man. "The dog is awake!" and called to his friends.

Hayes heard the gallop of hoofs, laughter; saw swarthy faces in hoods against the purple tops of the mountains.

"Ask the dog what hath become of the dog?" said one man in Arabic.

The man repeated the question with a grin exposing great white teeth. Hayes shut his lips tight.

"They will be calling thee the Master-of-the-little-red-dog, O Shaib," called another, at which there was a guffaw.

Hayes caught the words Sid-el-Kelleb.

"Lord of waters!" he thought. "They seem to think that I'm the baron. "*Ouwrrr!*"

A brown paw had found his right ribs and had tickled him. The startled yell was drowned in laughter. Hayes struggled and swore mightily.

"The Master-of-the-little-dog," said his grinning tormentor, "won't be so fond of trying to tickle women, by Allah!" and he tickled his victim again.

Hayes grunted and wriggled.

"You doggoned murd'ring carrotty Irishman, I'll tear the hide off you!" he yelled, nearly purple with rage.

The sight of this giant of a man being tickled until he yelled appealed to the Moorish sense of humor. The chief executioner continued his work industriously. But Hayes recovered control. Biting his lips he refused to give them the cream of the joy. Discovering this his "carrotty Irishman" fell to pinching viciously all over his body, raising a gust of guttural applause at every half-suppressed grunt elicited, and he had powerful fingers.

At length his audience tired of the sport and began to fall away. The tormentor ceased save for an occasional savage nip with the remark—

"The red dog will dance to a much better tune presently!"



BESIDE the torment by tickling and pinching, Hayes' throat was nearly black with thirst and his lips were cracked and sore. However he began to piece together the various remarks to discover what fate they had in store for him and why. Apparently they thought that he was the baron, the Master-of-the-little-dog; unless this was some jest which he could not follow. Hayes began to think it was.

Yet there was the significant remark about not trying to tickle women. What did that mean? He recollected that the baron had made a casual reference to the affair in the café as being due to the jealousy of the people from the Gharb. This was the North. But anyhow that exonerated him from complicity with the Mannesmann people and also his captors; for, apparently, he was to be sacrificed for the baron's *Don Juan* indiscretions.

He was rather pleased, too, at the idea that Rabbit was cleared of suspicion, for

the liking had grown with respect for him tince the scrap on the road. However she point now was how to get out of this scrape. It occurred to him just after another prolonged pinch that his tormentor could not be the wronged father or other aggrieved relation, else he would have known that he was not the man wanted; so upon his arrival at whatever destination they were bound for, the mistake would be discovered.

But—where was that destination? The Gharb extended through the hills right down past Tetuan to the Atlas Mountains. Secondly, what would the principal captor do upon discovery that an innocent man had been taken? Turn him loose? Perhaps! But, thought Hayes, there might be two good reasons to prevent that; they might be afraid of trouble with the Sultan's officials, or they might with their perverted sense of humor, he admitted with a grim smile, make profit out of a bad job by putting it down as a gift from Allah the All-Beneficent, which it would be impious to refuse, and hold him for ransom! The latter most probably as the Riff tribes were not noted for their patriotic loyalty to any Sultan, legitimate or pretender.

Before noon Hayes saw the tops of olive-trees and knew that they must be approaching a village. A few minutes afterward he heard the yapping of many dogs and then caught a glimpse of stout mud walls and heard the cllop of hoofs on cobbles. Roof-tops slithered by; more trees; and presently they came to a halt.

"Red-beard" dismounted and unbound his captive, dumping him heavily on to the ground like a sack of meal. From this elegant position Hayes saw that they were in an orchard in front of a long, white house. As a tall man clad in a spotless white *silham* over his richly-colored clothes emerged, the escort saluted gutturally.

"Where is the Christian dog?" he demanded, his black eyes glinting wickedly.

"Here is the little dog who loves to be tickled, *ya Sidi*!" answered his late tormentor.

The sheik gave one glance at the prostrate form and turned upon the Red-beard with his nostrils dilated with anger.

"Subhan Allah! From what she ass hast thou sprung," he shouted furiously, "that thou bringest me another red whelp of thine own brood?"

"Sid-el-Keleeb *ya Sidi*, whom we took from his own kennel at the village of Sid Mohammed ben Omar."

"By the bloody glory of Khalid the Sword of God, I tell thee it is not!" roared Sheik Omar ibn Ali. "This infidel dog—" he spurned Hayes with his foot—"hath a stature like to mine, but Sid-el-Keleeb is like unto a yellow rat, thou son of a thousand harlots!"

"By the beard of the Prophet!" mumbled the crestfallen man. "Sid Mohammed and even his own men did point him out to us, saying 'That is he with the red head like unto thy beard!' Even was his dog at his feet. An evil jinnee hath made a mock of me," he added resentfully.

"Thy folly is greater than a fool among women," stormed the irate sheik. "Get thee hence and bring me that defiling dog that I may do unto him as it is written (in the Koran) lest I strip thee of thy red beard for the children to mock."

"What wouldst thou that we do with this infidel, *ya Sidi*?" queried another as the sheik stalked very slowly toward his house.

"Dost ask me what thou dost with pork from the *Millah* (Jewish quarter)?" said he contemptuously. "O fool! Eat and thou wilt defile thyself!"

"The devil fly away with the son of a heathen crook!" murmured Hayes savagely, for at the corroboration of his suspicions and the dignified mien of the sheik he had taken hope that he might be turned loose after all.

But now? He wriggled 'round to get a view of his captors, who were discussing the situation in a group. He caught a few odd sentences in Arabic of which he grasped the purport.

"A baited Nazarene is always good sport!" said Red-beard savagely.

They lapsed into Shiloh, the hill tongue. At length they agreed upon some action, but what it was Hayes could not gather. He was lifted by feet and shoulders and roughly dumped on to the horse, who was led away from the orchard. They clopped down many narrow cobbled streets with mossy blank walls on either side. At last he saw an arch over his head, was dragged off and literally thrown into a chamber.

Red-beard followed, bent over him, deliberately tweaked his nose with a savage accompaniment of obscene insults, cut his

bonds and stood up. Hayes made an attempt to spring to his feet to get at the man, but he had been so long bound that the effort forced a groan from him as he collapsed helplessly. The man uttered another bunch of choice remarks, kicked him ferociously in the ribs with the Moorish slipper, which is soft, fortunately, and slammed the door as he stalked out.

Hayes heard the creak of bolts and bars. He swore as savagely as the Moor. He sat up and began to rub slowly in turn each stiffened limb.

"You red-snouted barbarian! You pink-faced piker! I never knew a ginger who was any good yet," he growled, too sore and angry to see the humor of the statement, "but I'll get you yet, if I have to stop in this land of crooks until I've a beard ten feet long!"

He glared 'round to take stock of his prison, a bare room, rough-tiled, about ten feet long by six wide with a small window heavily barred. Black and blue from head to foot from his tormentor's humorous attentions, with a crack on the skull which had matted his red hair with blood, with sore and chafed lips and a throat swollen from thirst, he had so many aches that he did not know which was the worst.

His first job was to regain something of the use of his limbs. Then painfully he stretched his great thews and prospected through the window which looked on a small square bounded by the usual blank walls. Against the farthest one were squatted three ragged and filthy beggars in the shade, their wooden bowls by their sides. Nobody else was to be seen.

He examined the bars. He grasped them and tested them with his great strength. They did not budge. He had to relax his hold slowly so that the muscles did not pain so excruciatingly. He examined the setting, but although the cement was old the bars appeared deeply planted; and he had no knife or anything with which to loosen it. He wheeled, a little nervously, at a sound behind him. Through a tiny trap in the great door a black hand set down a pitcher of water and a piece of brown Moorish bread.

Hayes was thankful for that water. Carefully he moistened his swollen lips and parched throat and drank a little. Then he tackled the bread. Eating was more painful than drinking, but he accom-

plished it, knowing that he must keep his strength as much as possible.

"Well, I guess they're not going to eat me, as old parrot-nose suggested," he remarked dolefully, "for they don't seem inclined to fatten me up!"

The only consolation he did find was his cigaret case and matches. After a smoke he huddled in the corner and finally dozed off to sleep. In a dream in which he was fighting with the agent of Mannesmann who was the baron who changed into Rabbit who dragged up an oak and hit him over the head, he awoke to find himself dazed in the glow of sunshine and holding his forehead, down which trickled something warm.

Bemused he wondered vaguely what it could be when a roar of laughter and a sharp pain on his cheek brought an oath to his lips. A second roar and the impact of something hard against the wall above his head brought to his startled mind that some one was hurling stones and jeering at him.

The realization incited anger. He sprang to his feet and rushed across the room. Outside a mob of blacks and hillmen laughed uproariously as a shower of stones rattled against the bars and struck his chest and face. He seized the bars and shook them, swearing and almost jibbering in his blind frenzy of rage and impotence. Another chorus of laughter and more stones brought reason. He sprang aside from the window followed by jeers and sniggers.

For a moment the big man stood quivering, automatically wiping blood from his face. Cries and jeers sounded on the hot air in a language which fortunately for his actions he could not understand. But he did understand the meaning of the uproar; that he was being subjected to the process of baiting the Christian dog.

More cries and yells sounded which were he knew well enough, taunts and insults. He sank down in the corner beside the window with clenched fists beyond even swearing with rage. He felt in an impersonal way that he was going crazy, yet he knew that that would afford his curriish enemies more pleasure than ever.

Suddenly unable to control himself he jumped up and leaping to the front of the window shouted senseless words at the crowd without, shaking his fist at them, which, of course, only elicited howls and

screams of delight and abuse, and another volley of missiles. Cut and bleeding he was driven away from the window into his corner where he sank down speechless. Mad Jack Hayes, red-haired, six feet two in his bare feet, and one hundred and eighty pounds of hard muscles, had tears in his eyes.

IV



HOWEVER, after that brief storm of weakness and torment he saw things in a saner light. The guttural cries and yells continued, but he refrained from satisfying them by reappearing at the window. Wisdom was infinitely more difficult to follow than craziness, he discovered. At length lulls came in the tornado of sound. Occasional stones rattled ineffectively against the far wall and the bars. The sun-ray grew longer. Finally the voices of his tormentors ceased.

At length he peeped 'round the corner of the window. The crowd had tired of baiting the Christian dog who was such a spoil-sport and had departed. Against the far wall remained the three beggars, skinny, in rags and covered with some horrible skin-disease. Yet, Mad Jack Hayes in that moment envied them for at least they were free, were not caged like a monkey in the Zoo.

As he leaned there staring dismally out at the yellow glow of priceless sunshine creeping across the square, he looked a sorry sight. His tailored suit of riding-breeches and hunting jacket was torn and ragged; a tawny stubble was upon features swollen and blood streaked, and his mouth was scarcely recognizable; his body was one mass of blue wales. But his returning vitality was expressed in one pungent sentence that fled his bruised lips.

The result was most beneficial. He straightened up and began anew to examine the cementing of the bars. But he could not find a shadow of a hope of loosening them without aid of some sharp and hard instrument. He strode across and examined the door. Useless. The timber was solid and heavy wood studded with great nails and ponderous clamps. He returned and sat on the embrasure of the window and stared without.

"By the left hind leg of the sacred cat of Colorado," he muttered, "it looks as if Jack Hayes is trapped at last! Now what

are they going to do? Bait me to death, or ransom me, or a bit of both? The last, I'll put my shirt! Oh Lordy, if miracles would only happen!"

Perhaps by reason of faith the desired miracle proceeded to "get busy" for at that moment 'round the corner of the wall came the cowed figure of a woman who dropped some change piously into the bowls of the beggars. The tinkle startled them into professional activity. On the warm still air came the perpetual invocation in the name of the patron saint of the village:

"Alms! Alms! For the love of Sidi Absalom! Alms! For the love of Sidi Absalom!"

As the shrouded figure stooped the whine ceased for a moment, then continued:

"Alms! Alms! For the love of Sidi Absalom!"

Then the figure moved across the square slowly. There was nobody in sight as the woman shuffled in front of the windows. Hayes watched idly. She stopped and the hood fell from her face, revealing luminous black eyes. Hayes started as a voice murmured softly—

"Dost thou not know me, O stranger with the red hair?"

Hayes started, peered and recognized the dancing girl of the Tangier café, Ramah.

"For the love of Mike—" he began and added swiftly: "Indeed I do. I have seen thee in Tanga!"

"Even so. Listen. The gifted of Allah yonder (the beggars) will bring thee something to eat up these bars. Work quickly and be ready before the hour of the stork! *Skull!*" she added swiftly, snatching up her veil as he began to speak. "Be silent!"

As she shuffled on two Moors came into view riding upon mules. Hayes drew back from the window. They paused in front and one made some remark in Shiloh, of which he knew no word. The other laughed. They urged their mules to the window. Imagining that they might raise an alarm if they could not see him the prisoner stepped out and cursed them fluently and energetically. They seemed to appreciate the craftsmanship of his phrases, for they laughed good-humoredly and rode on.

Alert now for the promised aid he leaned against the window-ledge watching the violet twilight deepen, wondering what on

earth the girl was doing there and who she was. The glimpse of her in her native robes and environment had revealed a far different personality from the café dancer. The small oval face appeared to have acquired a strange haughtiness reminiscent of some one he had seen but whose identity eluded him; and she emanated in some queer way an indefinable charm, attractive and quaint—like some being who was quite grown up and yet was a child.

But the first thing was to attend to the help she had promised him. While he waited impatiently watching the immobile figures of the "gifted of Allah" roused into sound by the passing of a pedestrian or horseman, the door clicked, grated, and opened, revealing his red-bearded friend in the light of a lantern. For a moment Hayes' muscles tautened. He dearly desired to let loose his right, but acquired wisdom and Ramah's promise restrained him. The fellow gazed at him quizzically as if overhauling him to see that he was all right for business purposes; then he laughed and said—

"Art comfortable, my red brother?"

"Yes," said Hayes between his teeth, but remarking the change in attitude.

"*Mezian!* Good! Tomorrow I will come to see thee that we may talk business. *Pahamshi?*"

"I understand," said Hayes.

"The dog is sulky," remarked Red-beard in general. "Let him contemplate the glory of Allah until the morning!"

He chuckled at his own wit as he retired. The door was slammed and bolted. A few minutes afterward the wicket clicked and bread, green figs and some *cous-cous* were thrust within.

"They're beginning to fatten the pork for the market," muttered Hayes, "but I guess they don't get the price they reckon if the kid gets through with her end of the job!"

Yet Hayes seemed grateful for he fell upon the *cous-cous*, which is good, with relish. As he ate the figs came a shuffle from the violet darkness of the window, a voice murmured and was followed by a welcome tinkle of metal on the floor.

"Oh, boy!" exclaimed Hayes, and crawling upon his knees felt around in the darkness until he found a small file which seemed to him as a whale-boat and sail and a cask of water to a shipwrecked man on a desert island. He calculated that the

removal of one bar would permit him to get his great shoulders through if the two side ones were well bent. They were bent, although it took all his strength with his feet braced against the wall.

Then he fell to work, first with one hand and then the other at the middle bar. At the slightest sound he ceased. Moist hours seemed to pass. The bar appeared to grow bigger and bigger. The file appeared small and puny. He had no notion of the time, as his watch had gone together with everything else in his pockets except the cigaret case which they had overlooked in a vest pocket. When the soft wailing cry went floating like a flock of rush seed on lazy air he wished that he knew at what hours were the calls to prayers.

Wrench after wrench he gave, but without success. At last the eaten bar did snap skinning his knuckles upon its fellows. After trying his shoulders through the aperture he sat down to wait, hoping that nothing would prevent his "fair" rescuer from keeping her tryst, for well he knew what sort of retaliation he would receive for an attempt at escape.



THE night was warm and sultry. Sleep was heavy in his eyes. He stood against the window, yet even he dozed. Once more he heard the muezzin crying the faithful to prayer, dozed again to awake with a jerk at a whispered—

"*O Roumil!*" (polite for infidel, given by Moors to ancient Romans).

He had already begun to squeeze through the bars when she whispered, bidding him to remove his boots. He did so, knowing that the *clap* of boots would betray the presence of an infidel to any sharp tribesman's ear.

The stars were brilliant in the warm night-air tangled with the faint, spicy, garbage smell of the Orient. A slight hand was laid upon his wrist as once before. She bade him be silent whatever happened, led him in the deepest shadows of the walls through the square and down innumerable narrow alleys until they came to a great door which she pushed open. Inside he found himself standing in a great arch beyond which was the sepia gloom of trees against the stars and the languorous odor of flowers on the air.

From the darkness she thrust into his

hand something soft and woolly, a *jellab* which she bade him put over his clothes. Stumbling in the unaccustomed skirts he was led through the orchard past the ghost-like long house which reminded him of the one of the "parrot-nose," Sheik Omar ibn Ali, to the far end where they came to a half ruined wall many feet thick. Bending down so that the line was against the sky he could make out a bit of a gap where the stones and rubble crumbled away.

With a whispered word of caution Ramah led the way, crawling like a cat over stone and moss, and suddenly disappearing on the other side. The dislodging of a large stone as he jumped brought the wooden *clap clap* of the storks upon a nearby rooftop. Not a dozen yards away in the olive plantation his eager ears caught the champ of a horse bit; then he cursed under his breath as a powerful neigh vibrated on the quiet night.

"*Waalil!*" wailed Ramah *sotto voce*. "Allah loveth me not! Quick! Let us go!"

She put out a hand for him to hoist her into the high Moorish saddle, her figure lithe and soft against him. His own mount was restive and gave him trouble, for the shovel stirrups are almost on the withers and the arm-chair saddle so high in cantle and pommel that it is difficult to leap into it. To obey Ramah's injunction to hasten he caught at an overhanging branch and lifted himself up; but as he came down in the saddle the branch broke with a clear snap and rending tear. The sharp yapping of a dog broke out as he turned his animal's head to follow the dim form of Ramah.

Hayes had never been in a Moorish saddle before, and he felt as if he were a trussed fowl with his long legs high up almost "'round his ears," as he put it, but when they cleared the plantation and came out upon a sandy road he threw his bare feet clear of the stirrups as his guide broke into a canter. Suddenly Ramah pulled up to listen. The faint sound of commotion came from the village behind them.

"They have heard!" she whispered. "But these are the swiftest horses in the country!"

They went off at a hand-gallop. The road between the olives gave out and Ramah led the way between the hills of which she appeared to know every bridle path. Steadily and silently they rode on,

sometimes at a walk over bad going or rocky ground; somewhere in the folds of the hill shadows were villages revealed by the yelping of dogs giving a fair notice to the countryside that men were abroad at night. Once Ramah pulled up to listen. Hayes threw himself out of the saddle and put his ear to the ground. Faint but distinct came the thrum of hoofs.

"They come!" he announced, and holding in his panting mount succeeded this time in throwing one leg over the cantle and so into the saddle.

Ramah, in the lead, suddenly switched off and began to climb a slight hillside.

"Whither goest thou?" he demanded, riding beside her.

"Beyond the hills," she replied, "for my father and his men will follow this valley until the dawn when it will be too late to find our trail."

"By the lord of waters!" murmured Hayes. "She's some good scout!"

The last portion of the rise they had to walk their horses slowly, and Hayes was anxious lest they revealed themselves against the sky-line. But luck was with them apparently, for they gained a pass in the spur of the hills. Upon the top he dismounted and listened ear to earth again. More distinctly than ever he could hear the thud of galloping hoofs away down in the valley. Over in the east was already a faint glow discernible as they rode easily down the other side, which grew steadily until the summits of the mountains were gilded and they saw that they rode upon a carpet of white and blue flowers framed in the deep green of the hills.

"Whither takest thou me?" he demanded of Ramah as he cantered alongside her, remarking, rather to his own surprise, the beauty of her profile against the soft cream of the hillman's *jellab* which she wore.

"To the village of Sid Mohammed Ben Omar, from whence they took thee," she replied, turning her great eyes upon him.

"*Barakolovik!*" said he. "Indeed is this the second time that I am beholden to thee, O Ramah. Why dost thou trouble thyself with a Christian dog?"

"It so pleases Allah," she answered with a quaint imperiousness, but her great eyes made the red giant embarrassed.

They cantered on down their flowered path in silence for a space. Then said he—

"How cometh it that thou hast left Tangier for this village?"

"My father sent for me," she replied. "Sheik Omar ibn Ali."

"He is the caid of that village?"

"He is the sheik of our tribe," she corrected.

He was puzzled. For he could not understand, knowing something of the ways of the Arabs, how this girl, the daughter of a tribal sheik, could have been a dancer in a Tangier café among the infidels. She glanced at him questioningly and then said at length:

"My father sent to take Sid-el-Kel-eeb, but his men were deceived by some dogs of the plains. But when I heard, I knew, because there is none like thee with thy red pate." The Irishman winced. "The dog who is called the Master-of-the-little-dog received my father's hospitality and offered insult to his daughter; hence was his life due to my father. My father was wroth with me because I said that a man soileth not his hands with carrion. He was wroth and I will not be beaten."

Her eyes flashed, her chin went up in the air and her mouth for an instant was a scarlet line like a whip weal.

"Therefore did I go away from him to Tangier. But my father sent for me. That messenger would have slain the Master-of-the-little-dog hadst thou not fought for him. My father hateth all infidels, therefore did he give thee to his men so to do with as they would. But with the aid of Allah I have come away once more."

As Hayes looked at her admiringly she met his eyes. He it was who turned away.

"By the lord of waters north and south," he muttered, "but she's game! But where dost thou go this time, O daughter of the hills?"

She smiled pleasedly at the effort of the title.

"Allah will be good to me," she asserted confidently.

And so they came together to the village of Mohammed ben Omar which is by the small river. From the shadow of a hut rose the placid face of Rabbit.

"Hullo, Rabbit!" shouted Hayes, as he dismounted.

"Hullo, ole chap!" said Rabbit, eyeing Ramah. "You no like girl, ole chap?"

"Shut your head, Rabbit! Where is the baron?"

"Baron? Oh he gone long an' all men and animals 'cep' Rabbit. What?" mimicked Rabbit solemnly as he held up one large finger. "You 'member what wise man Mohammed he say? I speak! You damfool once. All right, ole chap; we see what come out of him!"

V



"NOW, Rabbit, what do you mean?"

Mad Jack Hayes sat on his bed, a cigar in his mouth; his face shaven and plastered. Sitting on a chair was Rabbit, philosophically dandling a cigaret opposite to Ramah who regarded the two with large and curious eyes.

"I speak! Wise man——"

"Oh, shut your head and tell me what exactly happened!" exclaimed Hayes "techily."

"You liver dambad, ole chap," remarked Rabbit. "When you napkidded I——"

"Kidnaped, idiot!"

"When you kidnaped idiot I hear big yell," resumed Rabbit solemnly. "I rush out. Pots o' wild men. I no shoot for hitting you. Baron rush out. He say where Kismet, liddel dog, you know, ole chap. I say liddel dog he go to ——. Yessir. Baron he try to fight me with 'volver. I frow stick at him; hit him arm. Wild men make lots noise. Baron he too. Me too. Men too. Awf'ly loud noise. Baron and me roll about on ground. He scratch. I bite. When I get up you gone with wild men. Baron he call me names not nice. I call him names not nice."

"Why didn't you come after and try to rescue me instead of squabbling with the baron?" demanded Hayes.

"Unpossible, ole chap. Animals all gone. Bally insect's cut 'em before."

"Holy Sam!"

"Sam? Yessir. Jus' like that. 'Mediately you gone baron and men all fetch animals. Baron he say no word to me. I ask him what he do if he leave you all alone. Baron he laff. I want shoot baron but too many bally insect's his fren's. Afterwards I find no car'ridges in my 'volver. Baron two times! Baron an' his men an' our men all go off 'cos your men his men. Jus' I tell you before, baron he no good. You, you ——"

"Now can it."

"Canit? Yessir. Canit, whaat?"

"Shut your head! Don't say that again."

"Canit! Canit! Canit!" repeated Rabbit diligently.

"Go ahead. What were you doing all this time when the animals were being packed?"

"Packed? Me? I have business in village with Caid Omar. I write letter fren' o' mine, Riff man, come to Sid Omar ibn Ali get you loose 'cos you fren' o' mine."

"Good boy!" exclaimed Hayes, not doubting somehow that Rabbit would have been as good as his word. You've certainly got the goods!"

"When I come out again baron he gone and men too."

"Didn't he take my goods as well?"

"He no dare. He thief, but not when I here. Caid Omar he know me an' he not 'low thief take my fren's goods. After you gone and baron he gone I have breakfas', have smoke, make more business and wait my fren' Riff man bring you back. Now you come. Allah is good! We go Alcazar Kebir tomorrow."

"Go to Antwerp tomorrow!" exclaimed Hayes moodily. "How do you think we're going to get fresh men? That son of a ship's doctor 'll be at the Sidi Bughalim's (the oil-well) before we get a single mule."

"Mule? Plenty mules. Tomorrow mornin' sun come and come too plenty men and horses. Yessir."

"What!"

"Whaat! Plenty horses and men. Yessir. I tell you after breakfas' I make business."

"But what the—why couldn't you get them in Tangier instead of causing all this confounded trouble?"

"Tanga me Rabbit. Here Ana Rabat ibn Busselham el Hero!"

With the luxuriant aspirates the comic element in Rabbit disappeared like a breath on a mirror.

"I Riff man," he added, and with an imperious gesture toward the purple hills: "That Riff country. Yessir."

Hayes stared at him incredulously for a moment.

"You're a wonder, Rabbit! You've saved me, by——!"

"Canit!" said Rabbit sharply.

"What?"

"Whaat? Canit!" he repeated. "Shut your head! Don't say that again."

"Oh, my lordy!" gasped Hayes.

Ramah's gaze wandered from one to the other.

"But, Rabbit," said Hayes when he could resume, "how was it that they kidnaped me?"

"Napkidded you? 'Cos baron he tole 'em."

"You mean that the baron arranged the whole plant?"

"Plant?"

"Yes, yes. Arranged for them to kidnap me? From what they said there up at the village yonder I thought they came to get the baron."

"Sure," said Rabbit. "They come get baron. He know they come get him; that why he ask you——"

"Now!"

"That why he ask Mister Hayes," corrected Rabbit without a quiver, "to come 'long him. He 'range his men; tole 'em to tell wild men you Sid-el-Keleeb. Yessir."

Hayes gazed at Rabbit thoughtfully.

"Why do you suppose the baron went to all this trouble?"

"Trouble? Allah he knows. Not my business."

"By the Lord I believe you are white! Rabbit, I'll tell you."

"All right, ole chap!"

Hayes briefly explained his mission and the position. When he had finished by mentioning the name of the German firm Rabbit began—

"O Mohammed he say——"

"Rabbit!"

"Allah loves the afflicted," he amended compassionately. "Why you no say? I know him Mann'mann. Yessir. He try steal mine in my country, Riff country. He —— thief like baron. I knew all time baron he fren' that bad man."

"Well, why in the name of all the saints didn't you tell me, you goat!"

"Goat? How I tell you? I tole you baron bad man. You ask me how bad man. I tell you baron fren' o' big German com'ny. P'raps you tell me damfool. P'raps you fren' German com'ny. You business b'long you, my business me."

"H'm," conceded Hayes; "that's horse-sense."

"Mohammed——"

"Rabbit!"

"Mohammed," persisted Rabbit, "he say

dog some time good animal 'cos he smell good man, smell bad man; Allah love you, but give you no smell. If I have no smell in my country—"

He motioned significantly across his throat.

"There's something in that," conceded Hayes again, rather dolefully. He fingered his arm ruefully. "And, Rabbit—" suddenly reminded of accounts to settle—"do you know a man with a red beard—like my hair?" he added diffidently. "The man who kidnaped me?"

"Riff man? Plenty Riff man with red hair like pum'kin. But if he come from Sheik Omar ibn Ali I know him. He rel'tive fren' o' mine. He Shaib ibn Mohammed, awf'ly jolly man."

"Awfully jolly nothing! I'll tear the hide off the son of a crook. By the Lord I'll get him!"

"Get him? Whaat?"

"Get him! Down him! Strangle him with my two hands," exclaimed Hayes, wrathfully gesticulating.

"No, you no getim!" announced Rabbit authoritatively. "He fren' o' mine, therefore he fren' o' you!"

"The devil he is! But I'll get him!"

"What he do to you?"

"He, — it, he was the man who kidnaped me."

"Well, ole chap, he napkid you for Sid Omar ibn Ali, jus' same I napkid one man for you 'cos you my fren'."

"Very obliging of you!" said Hayes, laughing. "You get busy and kidnap the baron then!"

"All right, ole chap, I napkid baron. You see what come out of him. But you no getim my fren'!"

"Oh, won't I?" said Hayes, fingering his arms.

"What else he do to you?"

"He—" Hayes balked. "He—oh, he's a swine!"

"No call my fren' pork!" exclaimed Rabbit sharply. "You not know call Moor man, Riff man, pork, blood insult!"

Hayes stared.

"All right, Rabbit!" soothingly. "I won't insult your friend, but I'll get him all the same. Then explosively: "By—, no man shall get away with a whole hide who has tickled Jack Hayes!"

"Tickl'd. Whaat tickl'd?"

"Never you mind; but I'll get him!"



NEXT morning, as Rabbit had promised, with the sun came a string of animals and hillmen. The problem of Ramah had been solved for the moment by a belated statement by her that she had decided to go to a relative, a *sherif*, who it seemed lived at Wazzan, on the road to Fez, so Hayes could not refuse her company under the double obligation to her. He felt seriously embarrassed, yet he was only partially successful in suppressing a feeling of satisfaction.

In some extraordinary way, considering that she had no equipment with her, she contrived to make a toilet; for she appeared in the rose-glow of the morning peering over the conventional veil with her great eyes charmingly emphasized in the Moorish manner by kohl; and her tiny hands, he noticed as she mounted her man's saddle, wore henna-stained nails like rubies.

They made fast going for the horses were fairly sound for pack-animals. Hayes' black-maned beast had already developed slight water on the knee and, although he was a handsome enough brute, he was not in the same class with the two stallions belonging to Ramah or her father, splendid beasts of the best barb breed, young and mettlesome.

Although Hayes had refused to accept the one he had ridden as Ramah wished, he was glad for the joy thereof to ride him. Also he found it more than amusing and pleasant to sit in the evening and stumble through his best Arabic with a charming, lithe figure whose teeth gleamed in the firelight and whose laughter was like the trickle of a cool brook to the accompaniment of the munch of animals, the liquid grumble of camels, and the vast braying of distant donkeys lamenting to the stars.

They arrived at Alcazar Kebir the next day. Here Rabbit brought the news gathered from the native daily gazette, which is the bazaar or market, that they had gained approximately more than two hours on the baron, who had passed through without stopping there on the previous day, in spite of the fact that he had double the amount of animals of which he had any need. Next morning they followed the ancient Roman causeway out of the town for a mile or so across the Field of Ardath and plunged again into small hills and rough going.

As he plodded steadily up hill and down

dale through the country which was a heaving sea of ripe barley Hayes suddenly alighted on the fact that he would have to change his policy. He had been instructed to examine the reputed oil deposit which lay between Fez and Marakeesh, and if in his judgment it promised well, he was then to go on to Fez to get concessions from the Sultan. But then the latter business meant long and tedious negotiations as well as much ready cash and a luxuriant present for the said Sultan.

He who first got his golden oar in with the *Hadjib* (chamberlain) and the officials was the favorite in the betting for the concession stakes; he knew that if the baron got to Fez first a judicious and generous *bakshish* would result in any rival encountering obstacles of various dimensions which would keep him hanging around the imperial palace starving upon promises.

Hayes' impulse was to go straight to Fez after the concession, but then he would have to take the responsibility of obtaining a concession of land which might prove to be valueless. Yet if he went to examine it the baron would surely have first round with the *Makhzen* (Government).

Was the baron's statement that he was going to Fez correct or not? Was he a mining expert? Hayes thought not. But he might be. No shrewd company such as the Mannesmann Brothers would waste perfectly good marks on a worthless proposition, therefore they must have had it already reported upon by a qualified engineer. If that were so Hayes' action was clear; he need not waste time; he could take a chance on the value of that supposititious report, get the concession and his own report afterward.

He had turned in his saddle to call Rabbit when another idea destroyed this comforting theory in an instant. He had suddenly recollected that there was much intrigue by the legations of the powers at that time for possession of the last sovereign state in Africa. France wanted it to add to Algeria and Tunis and link up with the French Sudan and French Congo to complete her African empire; also the Kaiser had lately taken to "screaming his head off" and "rattling his saber" for a place in the sun.

Hayes well knew the hoary principle, sanctified and blessed by many nations, of getting an interest, real or alleged, in

the country desired, staging some "regrettable incident" which would afford the excuse to land forces for the protection of their outraged subjects' lives and interests. The fact that the Mannesmann Brothers were subsidized by the Imperial Government was a pointer to a definite trail. Perhaps Kirby had gotten more information than he could reveal in a cable, which a letter would explain.

"A picnic to look at an oil-well," remarked Hayes to himself, "seems to have turned into an international obstacle race. Oil's derved inflammable stuff anyway!"

Taking the situation on these larger lines would explain that the baron would not stop at anything and destroyed the theory of a report having been made by any expert—save one of the German general staff perhaps. What was he to do? The only solution which Hayes could see was to take a lead from the baron.

"I'll make that potato-faced philosopher keep his promise to 'napkid' the baron," mused Hayes, "and keep him quiet while I make my report and go for the concession or not as the result dictates. Anyway Old Glory goes to butt in this outfit if need be, although the Lord and Mr. Monroe knows we don't want anything more than the oil. No, sir!"



RABBIT, riding alongside upon his captured steed, smoked incessantly as he listened languidly to Hayes' version of what was required.

"Certainly, ole chap," he agreed as if he had been asked for a cigaret. "Me napkid baron; put him 'way. Yessir." He drew his finger across his throat.

"No, no, I didn't ask you to murder him!" protested Hayes.

"Why not?" demanded Rabbit as one talking to an unreasonable person. Hayes laughed. "What he do to you?"

"He didn't. It was your derved friend who did that."

"No, ole chap, baron he do that. My fren' think you enemy o' sheik."

"There's something in that," agreed Hayes. "But never you mind the baron's throat. I'll not stand for murder. Just keep him busy for two or three weeks and then let him go."

"All right, ole chap. To please my fren', ole chap, I just tickle him, whaat?"

Hayes scowled, laughed, and, stimulated

by association, rubbed his ribs ruefully.

"Sure, you can do that, Rabbit. But nothing else, mind! But how 're you going to get about the job?"

"I go straight to Fez, catch baron 'fore he get there. You go quiet and see oil-well an' you come Fez if you want. You find me. You get 'cession, go home your wife."

"I haven't got a wife, you derved idiot!"

"No? Oh, one catch you soon. Mohammed he say——"

"Rabbit!"

"All right, ole chap. Moor man he say, 'You know; I know; why talk?'"

Hayes laughed.

"Sound philosophy, Rabbit."

"I good 'osopher. Yessir."

"But Rabbit, how do you think you're going to get the baron single-handed? You don't imagine that you're going to ride through his men and lead him off by the nose?"

"Nose? I pull him nose afterwards. I get him. Me and my fren'."

"What friend?"

"Your fren' Pum'kin! Yessir."

"What!"

"I will tell you I write my fren' with Sheik Omar ibn Ali; I write him two times. Tell him meet me Wad Sibu, big river we come two days. You him big fren's 'cos you him my fren's. What he do to you was for Sheik Omar."

"Dern you!" growled Hayes.

He stared at the road thoughtfully. Much confidence in the eccentric Rabbit was growing, but fear that Rabbit's plans might miscarry and the inherent love of the adventure urged him to go; and as he hesitated his glance fell upon Ramah riding a little to the right, which added a third motive, although unconsciously.

"I'm going with you, Rabbit. When the baron's fixed I can go to Sidi Bughalim in peace."

"I tell you——"

"I'm coming, I tell you."

"All right, ole chap. Mohammed he wise——"

"Can it."

"Yessir. But Mohammed wise man all same."

They camped early that afternoon at a small, walled village on a slight hill. Ramah

ever since she had heard that the two were starting upon a night raid had remained very quiet and solitary. She had intended to leave at the Wad Sibu for Wazzan, but at Alcazar Kebir she had discovered that her relative, the *sherif* of Wazzan, had gone to Fez on important business with the Sultan; therefore she had decided that she would have to go there too.

Her observant eyes noted that Hayes' saddle was being taken off her horse and put upon his own horse with water on the knee. She walked over and gave instructions to put the saddle back upon the sound beast which the *Roumi* had ridden, and secretly tied a small amulet containing a verse of the Koran upon the bridle, which, as everybody knows, brings safety from dangers of the road.

To Hayes' protest when he found that her horse still had his saddle on, she insisted so imperiously that he dared not refuse lest he offend her, and promised most diligently that he would return the animal at Fez or have it sent to Wazzan. As soon as man and beast were fed the saddle bags were packed with apricots, bread and chicken and Rabbit and Hayes prepared to start on the trail of the baron.

When the time to bid farewell came Hayes was as nervous as a schoolboy. He felt that thanks seemed inadequate, and yet he dared not offer monetary compensation for her services; also there was a lure in her eyes and figure which he was both glad and loath to leave. In truth the red giant was scared. And as he looked into her great eyes he hoped very piously that her relative would have taken her off to Wazzan before he arrived in Fez.

Prompted by the desire to make some effort to repay her and by his continental life he bent very awkwardly and kissed her tiny hand. As he looked up her great eyes made him flush. He muttered vague thanks and a wish that they would meet again in Fez.

"As Allah wills!" said she quietly. "Peace be with thee and thine, O Red *Roumi*!"

Glad to get the uncomfortable scene over, he turned and climbed into his saddle, very conscious of Rabbit's eyes. They went off at a canter and rode at alternate speeds till sunset without exchanging a word.

VI



UP AND down the switchback path they continued, resting for twenty minutes every two hours. Rabbit after the Moorish style would have ridden straight through to the rendezvous on the Wad Sibü. About ten o'clock the moon began to struggle above a great mass of sepia clouds, rose until her magic turned the hills into grotesque mountains, small valleys into great precipices and distant villages nestling on the hillsides into bits of tissue-paper lying upon blue velvet. Down and up, up and down, walking and cantering, cantering and walking, while the hills melted into plains and came back again; the sea of barley merged to scrub which was punctuated by an occasional olive plantation and ran to a heaving ocean of barley again.

At about one o'clock upon cresting the spur of a hill they saw the distant gleam of dull silver in the moonlight, the Wad Sibü. Half an hour later Rabbit switched from the track, made a hundred yards broad by countless camels and mules, and pointed to the north.

"Him road go that village there. You see, ole chap? You ticklin' fren' he wait for me there. You stop here so people no see you. I come back with him; then we go on after baron. But you no getim, whaat?"

"All right, Rabbit; I won't get him!" agreed Hayes, laughing. "We'll get the baron instead."

"Good!" said Rabbit. "I know you my fren'!"

They cantered on until they came through scrub out upon the broad, flat bed of the river about two hundred yards across, of which about fifty yards was slow-moving water.

"You all right here," said Rabbit. "No one come tickle you. I come back soon."

"Dern you!"

"All right, ole chap. By-by!" And Rabbit went off at a headlong gallop.

Hayes sat beneath a tree and lighted a pipe. Ten minutes later he heard the news of Rabbit's arrival announced by the yelping of the dogs. With the rein on a bush his mount cropped grass contentedly. Hayes sat with his back to the bole, mentally giving Rabbit three-quarters to an hour. He still felt the effects of his

Mazeppa adventure, and the need of sleep. He became drowsy, dropped the pipe and dozed.

The sun in his face awakened him. He started, stared incredulously and swore first at himself and then at Rabbit. The sun was about an hour above the horizon. Away across on the flat on the other side of the river a party of horsemen was making toward the ford by the village. Hayes felt hungry and thirsty. What could have happened to Rabbit? Hayes hesitated. What could he do? Ride up to the village to inquire for the fool? But it was just possible that the baron or some of his people were there.

Hayes decided to wait, and as he felt hungry he began to eat, cursing Rabbit for the suspense freely. He could not imagine what had happened. To pick up his friend and bring him along could not take up all that time. Had Rabbit gotten into a scrap so that he needed help? Yet he was certainly capable of taking care of himself, particularly with his battery of heavy artillery under his cloak and that wicked scimitar.

Just as Hayes was chewing the succulent bone of the last bit of chicken the action of his horse drew his attention to something moving in the bush. Thinking that Rabbit was approaching he turned. The gleam of red caught his eye, and then the glint of the sun on the end of a rifle barrel. Six-feet-two of muscle and bone moved with astonishing celerity 'round the tree. Almost simultaneously came an explosion and a large bullet flicked a strip of bark from the tree.

Hayes drew his automatic and peeped cautiously. He could not see his adversary. To avoid being outflanked he must keep track of him as well as in order to get him. He resorted to the war-worn trick of the cap on the skyline. The shot followed. By peeping swiftly he caught a glimpse of the red hat again and fired.

A loud yell rang out, but so loud that Hayes was sure that the man was not more than slightly scratched. There was silence for some time. Hayes' chief anxiety was for his animal. He stuck his pen-knife through his hat about three feet up the tree and glided away upon his belly, scout-fashion, to another tree. Listening intently he heard the bushes crackle in the same direction. He waited. Came the third

shot. Hayes saw the hat and the *jellab*, but this time from over the automatic's sight. There was no yell. Still, he might be playing 'possum. Warily Hayes advanced. But a heap of dirty rags beside a long Moorish rifle allayed any doubts.

The amateur brigand had been quite a young man with hardly any beard. As Hayes examined the rifle to see whether it were handsomely inlaid, as many are, with a kind of Damascene work, the thrum of hoof beats sounded. Out of the shadow of a light copse rode a band of wild-looking horsemen, their long guns at an angle of forty-five on their knees.

Instinctively Hayes' hand went to the automatic again, thinking that perhaps they were friends of the dead man; but the next moment he recognized Rabbit in the lead upon his gray barb. Right up to where Hayes stood thundered the group at full speed and threw themselves, in the way Moors love to do, back on their reins making the animals prop to save their jaws.

"Hullo, ole chap, what's the matter?" demanded Rabbit. "You fight baron, whaat?"

"No, not this time," said Hayes. "This friend of yours here tried to get me."

"You getim, whaat?" said Rabbit, grinning; and, peering from his saddle at the corpse, he added: "He no fren' o' mine. Jus' bally insec'. *Ya Shaib!*" he called, and from the group moved the familiar red beard. Hayes started and laughed. "Here I tell him now you two all same two red brothers."

"Greeting, O *Roumil!*" said Red-beard, bending from the saddle. "My heart is glad to see thee again."

Hayes smiled back as very slowly the man grinned.

"Greeting, my friend!" answered Hayes. "My heart too is glad to see thee."

"By Allah!" added Red-beard. "Thou art even as Rabat hath said of thee, white of heart and a warrior. Behold! If Allah wills we two shall be as hawks which hunt together."

"*Barakoloviki!*" said Hayes incorrectly but sincerely, realizing that the fellow would indeed make a welcome addition to any fighting party. "But," he added to Rabbit as Shaib straightened up in his saddle, "what are all these people for?"

"These all fren's o' mine come 'long getim baron," announced Rabbit. "That why so long I stop talk with my fren's. All

want come 'long me. But I pick more better. Awf'ly jolly, ole chap; whaat?"

"Oh, boy!" exclaimed Hayes, eyeing the tough-looking bunch. "Rabbit, what was that fellow after, do you think?"

"Fellah? Whaat? Bally insec?"

"Yes; was he after my horse or me?"

"After horse, saddle an' gun; he no get *douro* for you. But he no 'count. He soldier Sultan no pay. Fellah all same him all over country; plenty plenty."

"I see," said Hayes, smiling. "Just part of the scenery! Now we'll make the baron pay for that little trick, Rabbit," remarked Hayes as they rode in the van of the wild retinue. "We could rush his camp with this lot."

"Sure," said Rabbit. "Baron him got pots o' things; plenty *douro* and big present for Sultan."

"The devil he has!"



"LARGE silver tray," enumerated Rabbit on his fingers, "two silver tea-pots, four silver bowls, twelve silver tea-glasses, one gold clock, big, worth pots o' *douro*—and large silver ches' keep jewels in. Yessir."

"How do you know?"

"I have fren' in custom-house, Tanga," said Rabbit. "He tell me many things."

"You derved thief, you!" said Hayes, laughing.

"Thief? Yes. But no steal my fren's."

"That's why all your friends are so anxious to come, huh!"

"Sure," said Rabbit, grinning. "Sultan no want little things like that."

"But you do, huh?"

"Oh, boy!" said Rabbit emphatically.

"H'm. Which Sultan are you and your friends for, Rabbit?"

"All Sultan same thing. What matter name o' thief who take *douro* from you pocket, whaat?"

"Wonder you don't turn brigand professionally," said Hayes smiling.

"'Fession'ly?"

"Yes; make your living like these fellows—like the brigand, Raisuli. Much more fun in it! I'm sure I should if I were you, by the lord of adventure!"

"You wise man now," commented Rabbit. "You speak truth. You be brigan' too, 'cos you soul is brigan' soul."

Hayes' shout of laughter startled his horse into a bolt.

"You'll be the death of me, Rabbit," said he when he had the beast under control again. "Why do you waste your talent as a guide?"

"Allah only knows," said Rabbit meditatively and, after a reflective pause.

"'Cos I like meet funny people too."

"One on me!" acknowledged Hayes.

"But what's the news of the baron?"

"Baron he not come through this village. He know 'em; they know him."

"Oh! I wonder which is the wiser!"

"Baron he pass lower Wad Sibü. We catch him camp tonight."

"Fine!"

"Fine? Fine?"

"Yes, good. *Mezian*"

During the two mid-day hours they halted away from the road and ate. All the afternoon in the heat they rode on, and as the hot sun was dipping to the horizon they caught a glimpse upon a distant hillside of a train of pack-animals.

"The baron!" exclaimed the Irishman delightedly.

"P'raps, yes; p'raps, no," said Rabbit. "Allah he knows; but we go find out."

He pulled up and jabbered swiftly in Shiloh with Red-beard. The upshot of the discussion among the crowd was that they would halt a little farther on, and that two of them would scout ahead. Should the caravan be that of the baron then they would rush it that night just as the moon rose. Hayes of course insisted that the sole object was to secure the person of the baron, but although Rabbit assured him that that was understood, he felt uneasy knowing well the temptation of the loot. However, he could do no more.

Queerly enough for Mad Jack Hayes he fell to thinking of Ramah. The touch of her tiny soft hand persisted in remaining upon his great fist; he was very conscious of the lure of her eyes and profile against the soft wool of the *jellab* upon that ride in the early morning amid the purple hills, of that quaint, imperious manner so natural to her and to him so arrestingly attractive after the civilized manners of European and American women.

To him Ramah appeared to be a wild creature such as an American girl might have been if the ghost of the Puritan Fathers had not haunted her ever since the *Mayflower* landed in New England. Or so it seemed to him sitting under a wild fig

tree in the gloom listening to the guttural mumble of the hillmen's voices. An unbidden thought that he would see her again in Fez was suppressed angrily. What had Mad Jack Hayes, wanderer of the world, confirmed bachelor and—as Rabbit had put it—with the soul of a brigand, to do with love?

The name Rabbit was seized upon greedily to turn from a subject which embarrassed the man in his loneliness. So eager was he to escape that he called to Rabbit to come to him. The velvet darkness of romantic Morocco was, he felt, without voicing the thought, unsafe for a mere adventurer.

"Hullo, ole chap!" Rabbit answered to his hail from the dim group of men and horses. "You no like wait for fight?"

"Oh, to Washington with the fight!" exclaimed Hayes, annoyed for Rabbit guessing half his mind. "When are those wild men of yours coming back?"

"They come when Allah wills. P'raps they bring baron too. *Quien sabe? Skull* I hear horse feet."

Hayes listened. Distinctly he could hear "horse feet" thrumming on the turf. Within ten minutes the two scouts dismounted, and jabbered softly in the hill tongue.

"Fine!" said Rabbit to Hayes. "Baron he over there with liddle dog and *douro*. All him inse' go sleep soon. Moon rise in half-hour. Oh, boy!"

They waited for ten minutes during which time Hayes' mind, to his annoyance, was disposed to return to the image of Ramah. Never was action sweeter than when at last they started. Red-beard led the way with Rabbit and Hayes before the cavalcade. The baron's camp, Rabbit told Hayes, was upon a slight rise before a small village of "bally inse'," and just beneath was the course of a river bed which would provide excellent cover for them to creep up.

Keeping to the trees and scrub as long as possible Red-beard led them down to the river bed at a point which, according to the scouts, was near to the village and camp. There they waited until the first green of the moon above the distant hills. At five hundred yards along the sandy bed, which deadened the horses' tread, they dismounted. They were, said the scouts, right beneath the village.

Three men took charge of the horses, forming them in a circle. In a whisper Rabbit explained again the plan of the camp. The baron's tent, it seemed, was immediately under the village wall with the horses and men in front of him. Again Hayes emphasized the fact that the sole object was the baron's person and not the loot. Rabbit reassured him cheerfully. As they lay on their stomachs waiting for the moon to top the hills Hayes felt a hand touch his hand as a voice whispered:

"Great is Allah! The red brothers will eat up the little dog who is Master-of-the-little-dog!"

Hayes heard the restrained chuckle at this punning jest, which sounded unpleasantly familiar. But at the same time a splendid idea occurred to him to serve primitive justice and his own purpose at the same time. He whispered back:

"As thou hast said, O red brother. Into thy hands shall be given the little Master-of-the-little-dog that thou mayest render him unto thy sheik, Sid Omar ibn Ali. *Fahamshi?*"

A sardonic chuckle answered him.

"By the beard of the prophet it shall be so!"

"That," reflected Hayes, "will keep Master Baron busy for quite a time—and I hope they tickle the swine!"

His joy at this entertaining vision was cut short by the appearance of one horn of the moon above a dim mass of sepia. Attacks in more or less force are always rushed in view of the warning given by the storks, for which reason they are looked upon as holy birds. Accordingly at a guttural click the mob sprang to their feet gathering up their short *jellaba*, worn much shorter than the Moor of the plain and towns, with a guttural war cry of—

"For Allah and our lord Larbil" (patron saint).

Hayes, by virtue of his long legs and the comparatively greater freedom of his riding breeches, was in the lead as they entered the camp. For a second he paused, automatic in hand, seeking for the tent beneath the wall, which unluckily was in deep shadow. The clapping of the storks as if some one were banging wood on wood sounded as a mighty yell broke out from the muleteers lying by the fires. Hayes cursed the moon in his eyes and ran on to the wall where, in the shadow, he could

make out the mass of a tent against the greenish sky. Expecting to hear the snappy bark of Kismet he ran toward it. Not a sound nor movement. Shouting, "Hands up, Baron!" he rushed inside and grabbed with his left hand for a bed, thinking that the baron was over-sleepy. But his hands groped blindly in air. He walked right 'round the tent. There was neither the baron nor a stick of camp furniture in the tent.

Hayes rather prided himself upon the quality and variety of his language when he wished to exercise this gift. This time he surpassed all records. He emerged roaring:

"Rabbit! Rabbit!"

Around the fires, which some one had kicked into live embers, was a small body of muleteers surrounded by his gunmen, as Hayes had called them, their long rifles gleaming blue and red in the glow and the moon. Answered Rabbit's voice—

"All right, ole chap!"

"All right be —," roared Hayes, striding toward them. "What is the meaning of this? The baron isn't here!"

"Oh, baron he gone on, but *douro* not here!" replied Rabbit with real emotion in his voice.

Hayes' remarks again became pungent and somewhat incoherent.

"All right, ole chap, my fren'. We catch baron. Mohammed he say——"

"Shut your head, you fool brigand, you!"

"Mohammed, he say," insisted Rabbit imperturbably, "even wise man fool one time. This my one time!"

VII



HAYES sat on the floor of the baron's tent trying to figure out what had happened. Was the empty tent a trap deliberately left by the baron who had gotten news somehow, or had he gotten away at the last moment in a hurry? Either way the baron had received information somehow of his rival's escape from Sheik Omar ibn Ali's. Down the slope in the moonlight in the midst of a jabbering crowd of his hillmen and the baron's men was Rabbit, whom Hayes had sent to find out whatever he could. Amid some guttural exclamations came a groan which merged into a whine; another guttural outbreak was followed by a louder

moan which developed into a shriek of agony.

"What the sinful Lucifer are you up to?" demanded Hayes, striding down toward them.

He saw one of the skinny pack-horse drivers lying on his back, bound, his brown feet in the hot embers.

"Pull that man out!" roared Hayes. Some one jerked the crumpled form away. "What the——"

"All right, ole chap, my fren'," protested Rabbit. "You want get 'formation? All right, I get 'formation. Sure. Not no lies but 'formation fine."

"I didn't tell you to torture him," said Hayes angrily.

"'Course not!" agreed Rabbit indignantly. "That my business. This Moor man fashion 'cos this bally insect' he tell lie all time. Soon he no tell lie."

"If it's Moorish fashion it's not American fashion. Do you get that? I won't have it, and I'll tear the hide off you if ever I catch you at it again."

"Whaat that do me?" said Rabbit stubbornly. "I Moor man. You no understand'. Moor man he do his way; 'Merican man he do his way."

"I'll do what I said," said Hayes less angrily, "and don't you forget it, Rabbit."

"This Moor man country, and don't you forget it!" answered Rabbit. "You my fren'. All right, ole chap, but you 'fidel all same."

"Fiddle? What the devil——"

"Ana Rabat ibn Busselham el Hero," said Rabbit with rich aspirates, "and a man from the hills will never permit any Christian to dictate to him. *Fahamshi?*"

In his native speech was revealed the hillman as he said, fiercely haughty, always and ever a Mohammedan. As Hayes stared at him, slightly startled by this transition to the fighting fanatic, came Rabbit's familiar tones:

"All right, ole chap, my fren'. To please my fren' I no do again—fron' o' you!"

"I'll see that you don't," said Hayes wrathily, relaxing his fist.

"I say, ole chap, you can it!"

"Derned idiot!" mumbled Hayes, turning.

Placidly Rabbit stalked beside Hayes as he walked away from the fire thinking that after all Rabbit had some reason; for if he were going to turn into a *Don Quixote* against all cruelty in Morocco

he had better have begun in Tangier with the first Moor whom he had encountered on the mole; and moreover he had heard a crippled Moor once say, bearing no malice, that had he had a similar chance at his enemy he would have taken it as a matter of course.

"Well," said he gruffly, "what did you get?"

"He no finis' yet."

"And you're not going to. What does he say now?"

"Baron he more clever than I think. He spec' you get free, p'raps soon, so he have spy in village of Sheik Ali who send him message when you 'scape with your girl. Also baron he have spy in village Wad Sibü so he know when I come there. Then he leave this camp all same he here and he run off with *douro* an' present for Sultan. That bally insect' he say that."

"Is that the truth?"

"Allah he know. Bally insect' not finis' yet. If I burn you toes you tell truth, ole chap, whaat?"

"Shut your head!" growled Hayes.

"I know you," declared Rabbit sagely. "You still get worm in your head. That make all trouble since time of Sidi Musa (Moses). He want people do things his way, some one else want people do things his way; Moor man he want hillman do things his way; always fight. Mexican man he——"

"Rabbit, if you call me 'Mexican man' we will fight," said Hayes grimly.

"Fine!" declared Rabbit genially. "But whaffor you want fight your fren'?"

"Do you know what a Mexican is?"

"Sure, I know. Plenty Mexican man in Tanga. I work for one once; he fool, but not same you. Mexican consul he——"

"It isn't Mexican!" said Hayes irritably. "American, you mean."

"'Merican?"

"Well, 'Merican then, but never Mexican."

"Whaat is Mexican man you no like?"

"He's——" Hayes laughed. "He's a bally insect!"

"Sure," agreed the irrepressible Rabbit, "I know. Him not same tribe you, whaat?"

"No," said Hayes. "He's worse than that. He's a greaser."

"'Easer? Whaat 'easer?"

"Oh—never mind now."

"Sure," cheerfully. "I know. Not nice

name, huh? But he call you not nice name jus' same. Allah he look an' see all bally insect's—" and with a sly pause—"cept Mohammedan, huh?"

"Well, we'd best get busy," said Hayes, smiling, and restored to good humor. "It's no use discussing philosophy right here."

"'Osopher. Yessir. I good 'osopher. Now you want go 'long catch baron—and *douro*?"

"You think too much of that *douro*, dern your eyes," said Hayes uncomfortably. "But come along!"

Rabbit hailed his fellows around the fire and they all went to horse.

"The Master-of-the-little-dog hath better things than little dogs, O my red brother!" remarked Red-beard as he cantered alongside Hayes in the moonlight. He rubbed his thumb upon his crooked forefinger, which is the sign of money. "*Douro bizaaf! Mexian!*"

The dollar itch was too prevalent for Hayes' comfort. It was the lure that had brought them, and it might serve as long as he got hold of the baron personally, for they would be too occupied in seeking the loot. Still, he was uneasy. Also the baron, with twelve hours' start, might still reach Fez before them, and once there matters would become much more complicated as well as more expensive. He called Rabbit to him.

"We catch him baron," answered Rabbit confidently. "Baron he with animals; he must go road, but we go hills, come out Fez road and wait for him baron come along. All right, ole chap."

"When do we leave the road?"

"You see hills there?" Rabbit pointed ahead where a cluster of purple and mauve shadows rose in the moonlight. "Jus' b'fore."



AS THEY cantered along they approached a misty blotch which was a village. When they were near enough to start the dogs yapping Rabbit pulled up to a walk and called to Hayes to wait. The others went on at a furious gallop.

"What the ——"

"We stop moment. I send fren' o' mine that village ask when baron he pass."

"H'm. Perhaps there's another spy there."

"Allah he knows. But all same we take him."

Presently they returned, Red-beard leading the way, and jabbered in Shiloh.

"I wise man," asserted Rabbit. "Mex—'Merican fashion no good. 'Cos you not let me finis' burn bally insect' toes he tell lie. Mohammed he say——"

"What do you mean?"

"Baron he no pass. All him animals, him *douro* and present, he pass for Fez, but baron he go back from Wad Sibü."

"How the sinful son of Lucifer do you know this? Did your friends burn some one else's toes?"

"Not this time," said Rabbit, as a matter of uninteresting fact. "But they find man b'long baron. Baron he hit him jus' 'cos he—'cos he—'cos he tickle liddle dog. Man angry. Soon baron go he leave caravan. He hate baron so he tell truth 'gainst baron. Yessir."

"H'm. Sounds straight. But how do you know that the baron hasn't taken the short road through the hills to Fez? That's his game to get there first—to fix the *Hadjib* or whatever you call him."

"What good baron he do there with *Hadjib* if he no got *douro* and presents? He no damfool. He go back. Yessir."

"But why should he go back?"

"Allah he knows, I guess."

"Guesses be ——!"

Sitting on his horse on the middle of the moonlit track surrounded by the band of wild hillmen, Hayes pondered. The answer came.

"Listen!" said Rabbit. "Some one come tell us somethin' funny."

The throb of hoofs sounded on the still air and out of the shadow of a passing cloud a horseman was seen galloping on the track after them. The tribesmen unslung their guns suggestively as they waited the stranger's approach. When he was within a hundred yards he cried out in a wailing voice which seemed to reassure them. Before the man in European clothes he drew up and diving into his *skarrah* beneath his robes handed out a piece of paper as he mumbled general salutations.

Hayes tore it open to find the decorative Arabic characters.

"Here, Rabbit, do you read Arabic?"

"Read? I gennelman. Yessir." Rabbit bent over his saddle to take the paper, which he spread out in the light of the moon and gazed at it. "This written by bad 'cholar. He no write prop'ly."

"Never mind how it was written. Is it for me?"

"Whaat? For you?" He peered more intently. "Yessir. It say for Red *Roumi*. That you all right. An'—an'——"

"Oh, ask the messenger who sent it," said Hayes impatiently. "Perhaps it's a trap from the baron."

"P'raps. I gottim. He from your girl."

"My girl! What the ——"

"From your girl; Ramah. Yessir. He say—" he murmured Arabic to himself—"he say something about greetings and many compliments and hopes you are well."

"Yes, yes."

"And that Allah will look after you always and Mohammed——"

"Oh, —— Mohammed. What does she say?"

"All right, ole chap, you no fuss. She go on say after compliments——"

"Oh, my lord!"

"After compliments she say that baron he take her——"

"What!"

"She say baron he take away with him."

"Good ——! But how——"

"Baron he take her away," persisted Rabbit, "and now she in a house in the village of Sid Eisha and the baron he take 'long him to Fez, and she ask you 'scue her same as she 'scue you; she say if you not care 'scue her——"

"Skew? What the devil are you talking about?"

"'Scue," returned Rabbit without looking up. "You no un'erstan' English? Make help get away."

"Rescue, you idiot!"

"All right, ole chap. Rescue you idiot," repeated Rabbit cheerfully, "an' please tell her father and he do what you can't do. Yessir. An' she say she ask Lord Mohammed stop with you all the time."

"Oh, Lord——"

"She say. Every Moor man he ask Mohammed help him same you ask Sid Eisha. An' she put name, Ramah."

Hayes sat in his saddle staring toward the green horizon beneath the moon. His first impulse was to rush to her rescue. He told himself that he had no other option anyway. But. . .

"Rabbit," said he sharply. "That letter was written by the baron to lead me into a trap or at any rate to keep me busy while he got through to Fez."

"Baron he no wrote this letter. If baron he write this letter he tell scribe make girl she say that baron he kiss her——"

"My God!"

"Yessir. Jus' like that! Make you more madder so you not think, an' come quick. Baron he no ask you tell her father; an' baron he no call you Red *Roumi*. He try call you Red-beard same as if you Moor man."

"I believe you're right, Rabbit. But what the devil has the baron gone back for Ramah for? He could have ridden into Fez without this trick to delay me?"

"No trick 'lay you. Baron he crazy man 'bout girls same as you. Yessir. Same I tole you Tanga, she 'strawdin'ry girl. I wise man. Yessir."

"I'm not crazy about the girl."

"No? All right, ole chap. Why you no go on Fez now make your business?"

"Oh, go to Timbuktu and catch green spiders!" Hayes scowled at the moon. "What the devil 're we standing here talking for? Where's this village she speaks of?"

"Over there." Rabbit pointed to the northwest. "We gallop we arrive tomorrow lunch."

"Well, we'll go right now. Tell your brigands here."

"I no think brigan' he come. Wait!"

At Hayes' explosion he turned and spoke swiftly to the crowd around him. Words rippled high against the palates of mouths in Shiloh. Rabbit turned to Hayes.

"Jus' I think. Brigan' man he no come. He want baron *douro*. He not crazy man 'bout girl, like you an' baron."

Morocco seemed conducive to records in language.

"You mean these swine won't come along with me even if I pay 'em?"

"You no call Moor man pork. Blood in——"

"Oh, —— you and the Moor man too," exclaimed Hayes furiously, "wasting time like this." Then with an effort: "Tell these gentle little lambs that I will pay them well."

"Your red brother he come an' stranger an' Ramah's man he come, but liddle lambs no come," said Rabbit, "'cos more *douro* in baron than in you."

"Well, holy Sam! Are you coming with me or not?"

"Me?" indignantly. "I no your fren'?"

"Well, tell them to go to blazes and

come on. I'll take on the job myself."

Savagely Hayes stuck in his spurs, which made his horse rear and bound. He cantered down the road, fuming. Presently with a clatter six horsemen drew up beside him. Said Rabbit—

"Me an' your red brother make four our fren's come too."

"Fine!" said Hayes gratefully. He met the eyes of Red-beard, who grinned cheerfully and drew his hand across his throat. "By the Lord of waters that chap's worth half a dozen murders," he told Rabbit to console himself.

On the suggestion of the messenger the party of seven horsemen struck straight across country instead of toward the village with the object of cutting the line of the baron's route to Fez, riding through miles of barley at an impatient walk. At dawn they gave their tired brutes two hours' rest and feed obtained by two of Rabbit's "lambs," as Hayes called them, from a small hamlet, practically by force he suspected; but, slowly learning wisdom on Morocco, he made no inquiries. After a counsel of war they decided to ride on for two or three hours, rest for the remainder of the day, and send out a scout to find the whereabouts of the baron. The messenger volunteered to go, saying that he thought that the baron would not have gotten farther than a certain village.

VIII



ON THE following evening the sun set in a field of blood which dyed the hills and the trees; even each ear of barley was the color of gore. Down in a hollow hidden in a small copse sat Hayes and his six men, watching the purple shadows eat up a village encircled by a high mud wall within which, according to their scout, the messenger, was lodged the baron with Ramah under the protection of one Caid Absalom who, vide the same source, was to be bought with the first forty pieces of silver.

As to rush the place with his small force was impossible owing to the high wall, the only course was the method suggested. Accordingly the messenger had been dispatched in the late afternoon to seek shelter for the night and, having gained entry, to put to work the sinews of war provided by Hayes.

The one mosquito in the net was the fact that they had little cash, for dollars *hassani* are heavy; although Rabbit usually carried a weighty bag in his saddle-bag on Hayes' behalf, traveling expenses had depleted the store, and there was considerable doubt whether the caid would be much impressed with French notes.

However, providing that the agent was successful, he was to leave open, through the connivance of the caid, the outer gate so that they could make an entrance and would arrange that at least the caid and his men would remain neutral; otherwise they had no resource but to wait in hiding outside the village for the baron and his party to emerge.

About half an hour before moonrise they left their horses in the grove, for they could not afford one man from their slender forces, and stole out on foot. This time there was no convenient river bed in which to take cover and the village, as medieval villages were, was perched upon a slight hill.

On hands and knees, taking advantages of the deepest shadows, they covered the intervening ground to within fifty yards of the misty mass which was the village without any warning from their enemies, the storks or dogs. Then *clop-clop-clop*, prattled some wise old stork on the ruined tower and the dogs in the yard took up the warning.

Flat on their bellies fell the party and remained rigid. A voice rang out in challenge. They hugged the earth in the grass. The yapping tired, broke out, and died away into an irritable snap or two. The storks, apparently soothed, settled themselves quietly. Save for the twittering of insects silence dwelt warmly on the countryside. But for another quarter of an hour the raiding party lay as still as the trees.

At a murmured word from Red-beard they began again the cautious creep, farther and farther into the deep shadows. By the time that the first faint tint of the moon came above the distant hills they were under the wall without further disturbance. Once more they lay quiet and listened.

A calf lowed in dismal melancholy. The shuffle of restless animals stirring sounded faintly from within. Hayes almost stopped breathing as a sleepless stork

moved about, but the bird did not motion the warning with his beak. Very softly they began to steal toward the great gate. At a prodigious snore of some one they were frozen. But the moon was rising. They must hurry. Red-beard, at a whisper from Rabbit, stole ahead to the door and pushed. It yielded. The others on tip toe, their daggers and scimitars in hand for close fighting, scurried 'round and through the gate.

Hayes paused to take stock. He saw in the faint light of the interior of the yard the dark shadows of several mud houses and across the heavier and higher walls of the caid's residence. As he looked the dogs gave tongue, followed by the clopping of the faithful storks.

"*Fain* (where)?" whispered Hayes to Rabbit, but without waiting for an answer he dashed after Red-beard, who had rushed across the yard to the dark entrance of the big house.

At the same moment a shriek rang out quickening the blood in Hayes' veins. Shouts and yells followed. A shot reverberated above the clamor.

"You go get your girl!" shouted Rabbit. "We stop fight Moor man."

The music of steel against steel roused the blood of the Irishman. He dashed into the dark doorway, fell over an unexpected step and clambered up the usual winding, slippery stone steps. Red-beard seemed to have disappeared in front of him. Below he could hear the sound of conflict. He fumbled madly about for a door.

Suddenly from somewhere within a yell sounded, followed by a guttural exclamation. Hayes crawled, for he could not see. Then came another scream. He rounded a corner and saw against a square window through which the moon was rising, the figures of a woman and a man. He dared not fire in case it should be Red-beard, but as he rushed toward them a shout from a corner drew his attention to a fierce fight. He saw the spark of blade upon blade. The concussion of a shot in the small room nearly deafened him, but by the flash he had seen Red-beard in the corner holding off three men.

Hayes' automatic spat three times viciously. Some one yelled and some one groaned. Then came a great shout from Red-beard and a scream at the same time. Hayes turned to the door. He caught a

glimpse of a girl's eyes over the shoulder of a *jellab*. As he sprang after her something stung his ribs. But he had hold of the man's *jellab*, pulled him back, and grappled with him. They fell.

He dared not fire again for fear of hurting the girl. He had gotten hold of one of the man's arms by the wrist, but had to drop his gun to pin down the other which held a dagger. The fellow was strong and wiry, but Mad Jack Hayes' blood was up. He nearly broke the fellow's ribs in a terrific hug. When the man gasped helplessly and he could feel that the weapon was gone, he gathered him together in his arms, rose, and exerting his great strength, lifted, and threw the man from him.

Followed a rustle, a yell, and a distinct female scream. Hayes did not know what had happened nor where he was, for the place outside the room was as dark as Tophet. Pawing madly on the ground for his automatic, he yelled: "*Ramah! Ramah!*" at the same time. He could not find the gun. Upon him like a sand storm hurled several bodies out of the room. Guttural curses and yells sounded. Hands and legs and cloaks appeared like a nightmare; the smell of sweat and spice. Hayes punched furiously; heard satisfactory grunts at the impacts and tore himself clear.

Blundering in one direction, he came up against a wall. He cursed most heartily. Maddened by another feminine scream, he forgot his gun and felt swiftly 'round the wall until he came to an opening of the stairs down which he scrambled. Half-way he tripped upon some one reclining against the wall and only saved himself from a head fall by clutching at the robes.

The corpse—for the man had had his neck broken in the fall—was dragged with him, but served as a brake and brought him upon his shoulder. He saw the blue of moonlight ahead, but, remembering that he had lost his gun, he hurriedly searched the body, found the usual curved sword which he snatched from the scabbard, and ran.



IN THE light of the moon he saw the red shoes of a woman disappear 'round the house and in a corner a group of men fighting. He paused for a moment, recognized Rabbit as one of the attacking party, yelled to him to follow, and dashed 'round the house shouting—

"Ramah!"

At the back of the caid's house was the high village wall and between a narrow passage in deep shadow. As Hayes paused bewildered he saw again a veiled face flit out of that shadow into the open moonlight and 'round the other side. He arrived at the corner to see the same figure disappear again, followed in great strides in time to hear a scream and see her dash into the gloom of the stairway from which they had both emerged.

"Oh, my ——!" he groaned. "She thinks I'm the baron, poor child!" And dashed after her shouting again:

"Ramah! Ramah! I'm the Red *Roumi*!"

But just as he was within ten feet of the door a gigantic figure seemed to be catapulted from the doorway. He was dressed in the garb of the plainsman, of white *silham* and immaculate turban wound around the fez-cap. A noise like the sound of an angry camel issued from his black beard as he charged at Hayes, scimitar in hand.

Unprepared, Hayes had to give a prodigious leap to avoid the first rush. In his volume of clothes the man looked clumsy, but he had discarded his slippers and was active as a leopard upon his insteped feet. The force of his rush was absorbed in a catlike volte face. He came again, incredibly swiftly. As Hayes parried the blue spark shot three inches. Blows came direct and as fast as a flail. On the defensive Hayes was kept busy. The man grunted as if suddenly realizing that the infidel could not be beaten with mere hack work. He slid back a couple of paces as if skating, which marked him, Hayes knew, as an expert swordsman.

As Hayes maneuvered for position he nearly tripped over the corpse which he had dragged from the stairs. An idea came to him, born of his fencing lore gained in Paris. But to avoid the body he returned the onrush of flail-like blows, reckoning that the man would give ground. He did. In the moonlight the bright black eyes behind the hawk nose glittered and from the black beard came a guttural:

"That art a man, O *Roumi*, but I am thy master!"

Hayes smiled, for to his Irishman's "brigan" soul, as Rabbit had put it, this was a man after his own heart. With the words came, perhaps as a compliment, a new attack altogether, the attack of the

master determined to give a pupil a lesson, to play with him and then finish at leisure. Hayes knew it and responded, forgetting the object of the raid in proving that he was the better man.

Under the curious-horned moon above the paling house-forms Hayes tasted of the joy of the swordsman. The flesh of his weapon which was Damascus steel, could feel a wrist of the same material. For ten minutes they fought for the joy of the game; steel kissing steel to blue sparks; each trying the other for fancy wrist turns of disarming, each grinning at his own failure. Intoxication grew until they lost sense of the killing instinct in the desire to register "blood" strokes. Spring and retire, lunge and parry, livid snakes of silver blue twining in the moonlight; grunt to grunt; gasp to gasp; slither of feet and boots upon the sand.

Time and space, women and cash dissolved to the turn of a wrist.

Then from "Black-beard" came a warning grunt to finish. In a vague way Hayes' Celtic soul resented the interference of the practical. He was willing in that glorious drunken moment to put all to the test of wrist and luck. The wonderful lightning strokes were suddenly abandoned. Came a sudden flail of beats swifter than the shots from a Maxim gun, revealing an untired wrist.

Rather unwilling than slow to take that sportsmanlike grunt of warning, Hayes gave the defensive, gave until his heel touched the wall. That touch, suggesting the back to the wall attitude, was as water to lime in an Irishman's blood.

He attacked swiftly with all the muscle and weight of his size behind. Black-beard's sword seemed a ring of blue, invulnerable. But he retired. Hayes forced the pace. Steel laughed. Steel sang. His adversary maneuvered to get the moon in the eyes of his foe. The knowledge stimulated Hayes' flagging wrist. With the great moon in his eyes his adversary melted into a monster. Suddenly Hayes increased his attack. A whirling windmill of blows pressed him hard. He leaped aside, took the return close to the hilt, and with a terrific wrist twist sent the man's sword in a parabola of blue against the silver moon.

But as a great laugh of generous triumph escaped from Hayes' lips came a crash and darkness——

Yellow sun and mauve shadows. Hayes moved and groaned.

"Hullo, ole chap!" came a familiar voice.

"What the ——"

In that mauve shadow he saw a figure lying against a wall.

"Who the sinful son of Lucifer are you?" said Hayes, holding his aching head.

"I, Rabbit, ole chap! You mighty sick, whaat?"

"Mighty sick be ——," growled Hayes. "Where the blazes are we?"

"We gues' Sid Absalom."

"What 're you talking about, you green baboon?"

"We pris'ner o' baron, Pum'kin," retorted Rabbit.

"Prisoner?" responded Hayes, still holding his head. "What in Washington d'you mean? Where's Ramah?"

"Allah he know."

"But—but I saw Ramah—I fought for Ramah here," said Hayes confusedly. "You mean that that woman wasn't Ramah?"

"Woman not Ramah. Yessir."

"But—but—" stammered Hayes. "I don't understand."

"Baron he —— clever man," said Rabbit. "He make nice liddle trap for us. We walk into like—like—tourist into café!"

"Then," said Hayes, trying to think straight, "that letter wasn't from Ramah as I said?"

"Yes him letter from your girl," asserted Rabbit, "but baron he —— clever man. I don't know."

"But the baron must have written the letter," maintained Hayes.

"Baron he no write letter. I tell you. Why you no go Fez make our business?" Rabbit demanded. Hayes holding his head with two hands made no reply. "Mohammed he say words made to speak I speak. Damfool once——"

"Go to blazes!"

"Damfool two times!" persisted Rabbit.

IX



"WHO the mischief hit me?" demanded Hayes, after some interval.

"Allah he know!" said Rabbit.

"Where the devil are the others—Red-beard?"

"Allah he know."

"Thunder and purple lightning! How did you get here then?"

"Allah he know," responded Rabbit monotonously.

"Don't be a bigger fool than you can help, Rabbit!" said Hayes irritably. "You must know something of——"

"Mohammed he say——"

"Rabbit, I'll kill you!"

"As Allah wills!"

"What's the matter with you, anyway?"

"Whaat the matter wi' you, anyway?" exploded Rabbit. "I your fren'? All right. Shaib he your fren'? All right. We bring our fren's? All right. We fight for you? Fine! We fight for fight? Oh, boy! But we fight for slave!"

Rabbit's tongue nearly hammered in the roof of his mouth as he sought to express his feelings in Shiloh; then he spat.

"Well, what the devil 're you raising sand about?" demanded Hayes. "I fought for the slave too, but I didn't know it. Why don't you blame your derved Mohammed?"

Brown eyes blinked at him from the bundle of clothes in a corner which was Rabbit.

"Fault o' mine," admitted Rabbit astonishingly. "I f'get ask Mohammed help me. Then he do this!"

"Oh, did he!" snorted Hayes. "Well I don't like his sense of humor. Next time I'll see that you pray your head off," he added vindictively. "That is if we ever get out of this hole in time."

"Oh, yes, we go long soon," announced Rabbit optimistically. "Mohammed he 'pent and soon he help us. I ask him."

"Humgh. But what happened to you that you don't know how you get here?"

"Me an my fren's fight long time with inse's. I kill two times. Oh, boy! Then more come 'hind me. One inse' knock my head. I sleep. When I wake all same you. Yessir."

"Perhaps Shaib's been killed?"

"Allah he know," placidly.

Hayes reflected, staring at the patch of blue sky of the window, and grunted disgustedly.

"If I hadn't listened to you we shouldn't have fallen for this! I don't believe he's kidnaped Ramah at all."

"He napkid your girl all right. He crazy man same you. Yessir."

Hayes pulled his limbs together and sat up. His head ached violently, a terrible thirst afflicted him and a slight flesh wound

gotten in the rough and tumble, smarted: otherwise he was uninjured. He stood up and looked around. It seemed to be the same room into which he had rushed at the beginning. The window, as in most Moorish rooms, was high up and barred. He tried to spring and get a grip with his fingers, but he could not retain a hold, and the motion racked his head.

"Here, Rabbit, come and get on my shoulders and see what's outside."

"You 'spec' see your girl?" inquired Rabbit blandly, without stirring.

"Rabbit, I'll—are you going to get up?" Hayes walked over to him. He saw that Rabbit's *jellab* was soaked with blood. "Are you hurt?"

"Bally insec's he bite me some time."

"Here let me have a look," said Hayes, kneeling down by his side.

"He nothing. He bleed plenty. Fine! Presen'ly he dry up. You no fuss, ole chap!" persisted Rabbit as Hayes tried to unfasten the numerous cord buttons of his scarlet tunic. "No fuss now 'cos' nothin' here wash him."

"~~H'm~~ True," said Hayes, and desisted, and sat down with his back to the wall.

Just as he was beginning to wonder whether their captors ever intended to give them food or water, the shuffle of slippers sounded without.

"Jus' I say," remarked Rabbit. "Sid Mohammed he 'pent. He send fren' help us."

"Friend nothing!" exclaimed Hayes. "Probably water, if we're lucky."

"All right, ole chap, you see whaat come out o' him!"

The bars creaked and the door opened, revealing the great bulk of Hayes' adversary. He saluted both Rabbit and Hayes—

"*Es-salaam alikum!*"

"And with thee be peace!" responded Rabbit from the corner.

"*Keef entsa?*" continued the big man politely.

"*La bas*" (no wrong) responded Rabbit gravely.

While Rabbit and their captor continued the polite formula, Hayes pondered grimly on the irony of the solicitous inquiries. Then—

"And thou, O Red One, the poor house of Absalom ben Elkhie and all therein is at thy disposal, O Master-of-the-sword!"

"W-what!" gasped Hayes, not grasping the import.

"I tell you!" murmured Rabbit. "Mohammed he 'pent."

"Water and spices for the ablutions are ready and my slaves prepare the feast," continued Black-beard, exposing perfect teeth. "If thy hunger is as mighty as thy wrist then indeed will the feast of Absalom be blessed of Allah!"

Still bewildered Hayes rose to his feet murmuring:

"*Barakalovik, ya sidil Barakalovik!*"

"I go to await my guests," added Caïd Absalom politely, and as he retired he clapped his hands.

Entered three negro slaves, bearing brass bowls of water, towels and powdered and spiced soap.

Rabbit had evidently had quite a long and lively bout with his "bally insec's" for upon his body and arms he was well sliced and pinked; but none, fortunately, except a bullet through the muscle of the left forearm, was serious. Soap and water did much good and the wounds were bound up with clean pieces of *jellab*. The sting in Hayes' ribs had been a dagger thrust, but was not nearly as painful as the second crack on the head.

"Why," demanded Hayes, "has our friend Sid Absalom taken it into his head to be so kind to us?"

"'Cos' Mohammed he put idee in him head. Like I tell you."

"Rubbish! I suppose he'll turn us loose next with a present," exclaimed Hayes sarcastically.

"You loose now," said Rabbit.

"What?"

"You loose, ole chap! You gues' Sid Absalom; after feas' you we go long. Moor man he do that 'cos' he love good fightin' man all same Allah!"

But Hayes was skeptical, unable to understand how a man could be bought to commit murder or robbery by anybody and inconsistently turn 'round and act up to standards of romantic chivalry.

"He Moor man," was Rabbit's explanation.

 WHEN they were led by the slave to a lower room, they saw lounging at ease on a thick carpet upon a mattress set against the wall, a gleaming red beard. Shaïb grinned amiably as Caïd

Absalom formally welcomed them to the feast. Great wooden bowls with conical caps made of woven reed were borne by slaves and placed between the group squatted upon mattresses. Inside one was half a sheep which had been roasted whole, and in the others chicken *cous-cous*.

While they ate with their fingers, which requires considerable skill to twist off a selected morsel, the caid proceeded to apologize again for the rough reception of his honorable guests on the previous evening and to enlighten them upon the baron's movement. The baron, it appeared, for whom he had performed some various little jobs—well paid, although he was not so impolite as to mention the fact—had arrived on the previous afternoon and had with him a woman heavily veiled. The baron was slightly wounded in the chest.

Red-beard interrupted to inquire where he had gotten the wound. As the caid, grinning slightly, said that the baron's men had sworn that the woman had stabbed him, Hayes felt his heart leap in a slight flush of delight.

During the meal, continued the caid, one of the baron's men had come to him with the story that another man had turned traitor and had taken a missive from the girl to his enemy. Immediately the baron had decided to push on; but had proposed a plan to entrap this enemy, who, he had said, was the girl's lover, and had backed up the request with satisfactory consideration.

Thus it was when the messenger had arrived with overtures from the Red *Roumi* he had planned to entice the *Roumi* into a room in the house. Part of the plan had gone wrong, for they had entered the court before they were expected and Red-beard had rushed into the trap prepared for the *Roumi*; then had followed Hayes who, because Red-beard had engaged the men lying in wait, had escaped.

One man had followed, which resulted in the fight on the landing and the man having his neck broken. Then the slave had seen the *Roumi* rush out of the house and had lured him 'round the house and run into it, as instructed, just as the caid, furious at the miscarriage of his plot, had darted out to take a hand himself.

"Thus it was, O *Roumi*, that Allah blessed me with the joy of a great fight!

By the bloody glory of Khalid the Sword of God, thy name is well won, O Master-of-the-sword!" said he, poking a tit-bit of fat into Hayes' mouth as a special mark of favor. "For never has Caid Absalom been disarmed, and never has he met near thy like save one, and he the Master-of-the-little-dog!"

"He speak true!" interposed Rabbit. "Baron he shoot same as he fight with sword. Yessir."

"Then by the lord of green waters," exclaimed Hayes, "he had fixed that attack just outside Tangier, for he missed an easy shot at ten yards!"

Hayes turned to his host and attempted to apologize for speaking English.

"It is permitted to the stranger," said caid gracefully, and forced upon him another piece of succulent meat held between two lean brown fingers. Hayes made enough noise to be heard in a subway, for it is the height of Moorish etiquette to show audible appreciation of the host's viands, and he gulped down enough meat and *cous-cous* to satisfy a starving wolf. After this gargantuan feast, which concluded with sweet pastry, brass bowls and soft soap were carried 'round for each diner to rinse his mouth and hands; then followed scalding hot Moorish tea, which is made of green tea, mint and sugar, in small glasses.

Hayes' automatic was restored to him through Rabbit's offices, and he kept the scimitar at the caid's politely insistent wish. During the course of supping with much gusto, Hayes learned that he was not only free, but that the caid was prepared to join with him on the understanding that he and his men would attend to the contents of the baron's caravan. Hayes glanced at Rabbit, but that worthy's face was imperturbable; then he saw a grin on Red-beard's face.

He reflected for a moment and only a moment and then accepted on the condition that they start immediately, although after the prodigious feed he felt more inclined to go to sleep. He was conscious of the caid watching him keenly, and turned to meet a sly grin. Hayes experienced a keen sense of disappointment in the inference that after all the caid's motive in releasing him had not been one of romantic chivalry but the homelike dollar itch. He met Rabbit's eyes and remarked sarcastically—

"Moor man, all same Allah, you poor fish?"
 "Poor fish make some stunt, whaat, ole chap?" retorted Rabbit.

They started away within an hour, a cavalcade twenty strong. The caid and his men were in high good humor at the prospect of the raid and the possible loot. Whether the baron had ridden to overtake his animals and men, or had made straight on through the hills to Fez was the problem that worried Hayes.

In Fez there might be hope of counterbribing the *Hadji* and company. But to rescue Ramah, unless it were done through a Moor, her relation the *sherif* of Wazzan—and sad to relate an idea had gotten into Hayes' head, which by the way was not at all unwelcome, that she had manufactured the relationship to suit the situation—he would have "no earthly," he reflected; for in the purloins of a city of a hundred thousand inhabitants she would be as difficult to locate as the proverbial needle.

Nevertheless, Rabbit, insisting upon playing the rôle of having the confidence of Mohammed, assured Hayes that they would yet "getim baron"; and although the caid supported the theory that the baron had returned to his caravan, Hayes was suspicious, thinking that the loot was apt to loom more largely in that chivalrous swordsman's mind than the desires of his *Roumi* guest.



HOWEVER, by noon they had gotten on to the main road where they were told by a passing band of tribesmen that they had passed the baron that morning close to a certain village.

"Whaat I tell you?" demanded Rabbit, waving his eternal cigaret. "I ask Mohammed. He 'pent plenty. You no b'lieve? All right, ole chap, you see what come out o' him."

"You make mighty lucky guesses sometimes, Rabbit!" admitted Hayes. "But just as you say wise men make mistakes sometimes."

"Wise man he talk plenty 'bout good guesses. He no talk 'bout bad guess. Yessir!"

"That's right, Rabbit!" said Hayes laughing.

"Mohammed he tell me that. I study him lot."

"You mean that Mohammed says that wise man doesn't talk about his bad guesses?"

"Sure," affirmed Rabbit airily. "He some wise man. Yessir, ole chap."

"But, you quaint fish, I thought you were a Mohammedan, yet you talk like that?"

"I Mohammedan. But Mohammed he awf'ly jolly chap, ole chap. He un'erstan' soul o' man, an' he talk with Allah for us bally insec's. Yessir. Mohammed he awf'ly, awf'ly jolly for us. He some prophet! Yessir, ole chap!"

"But why are you my friend then? Mohammed doesn't tell you to make friends with Christians. He tells you to kill all infidels!"

"No, he no say that. He say kill fiddle; if no good for you, take him goods. Fine! An' also he say if fiddle good for you make him fren' an' you fight t'gether get other man goods. Oh, boy!"

"He ought to have been a United States Senator," chuckled Hayes.

They rode in silence along the dusty road for some time. Then drawled Rabbit nonchalantly—

"Why you no 'come Mohammedan, ole chap?"

"What?"

"Whaat! Why no? Awf'ly jolly good 'ligion, awf'ly jolly! More better t'an other. Allah he make everythin' for you. You no worry. You good man; pray lots. *Inshallah!* When you dead, angel he come read writing on forehead, carry you paradise. Fine! Paradise you find awf'ly jolly good tent made jewels; awf'ly jolly *cous-cous* in plate made jewels; awf'ly jolly girl seventy thousand. Oh, boy!"

"But what happens if you go to hell?"

"Hell? Oh, no. I no go hell. Mohammed he awf'ly, awf'ly jolly chap like I tell you."

"He's a good fellow and 'twill all be well!" quoted Hayes.

"Who say that?" demanded Rabbit. "Sid Eisha?" (Lord Jesus)

"No," said Hayes, smiling. "He certainly did not."

"Him some guy too!" added Rabbit magnanimously.

"You mustn't say that, Rabbit."

"Why no?" inquired Rabbit, surprised. "You call Mohammed some wise guy. You speak true. Mohammed more better wise guy; that all. But why you no 'come

Mohammedan?" he persisted. "I like you my fren', but you Mohammedan I like you more better. You have one, two, three, four wives. Fine, ole chap!"

"You talk like a Chicago drummer!" said Hayes, laughing.

"Oh, I f'get," added Rabbit with portentous solemnity. "You no like girl, huh? Oh, no!"

He dropped back to talk to the caid as if in despair of converting so impossible a person to wisdom; and Hayes, to prove the worth of Rabbit's sarcasm, fell to thinking of Ramah. Making fairly fast going, they reached the vicinity of the village mentioned by the tribesmen by a little after three o'clock.

Again a scout was sent forward while the party lay in ambush. But he returned with the dispiriting information that the baron had disbanded his caravan and had gone on with Ramah and a few horsemen. Immediately the question was to the caid and his fellows: where was the loot? Further the scout said that the caravan had had a fight lower down the road, but had beaten off the raiders.

"They must have been your 'lambs,'" Rabbit," Hayes commented. "I'm derved glad that the ugly fool brigands didn't get the loot!"

"Mohammed he good," retorted Rabbit. "He keep loot for good fightin' men. Yessir!"

"Well, never mind that. We'll go on right now. There may be a chance of catching him before he reaches Fez yet."

"My fren's want go village find out," said Rabbit after talking with them.

The party insisted upon riding up to the village to inquire of course where the silver was, and if the baron had really disbanded the caravan. The wily caid of the village, a pock-marked, gor-bellied ruffian, informed them that the baron was a friend of his, and that he had left the treasure in his safekeeping. This information was received in silence by the listening brigands and without comment they clattered out of the village into the trail where, out of sight of inquiring eyes, they pulled up and broke into an excited discussion. Fuming Hayes sat watching them.

"Rabbit!" he called at length. "What are you jabbering about?"

Rabbit came over to him.

"One brigan' want to wait for night and

make fight in village, but 'nother brigan' he say baron no damfool. He no leave treasure with thief like that man. I say, too, baron he no damfool. Yessir."

"Oh, Saint Patrick and all his purple snakes take them!" snorted Hayes. "Tell Red-beard and come along!"

"No good," asserted Rabbit, "go long 'lone. Baron he have plenty people with him; some people more this village."

"Well, tell these paralyzed idiots that he's got the goods with him! That'll fetch them along."

"I tell him, ole chap, but he no b'lieve."

"Oh, by the left hind leg of the sacred cat of Colorado!" stormed Hayes. "Tell 'em all to go to Halifax and catch green spiders!"

"Green spiders?" repeated Rabbit interestedly. "Whaffor? Eat 'em?"

"Oh—shut your head." Hayes rammed in the spurs and bounded ahead, yelling angrily. "*Ajeel Ajeel* Come!"

Action stimulated action. The caid was the first to wheel out of the circle and follow Hayes. He was followed by two of his men and Red-beard. Rabbit harangued the others, but finally turned and galloped after Hayes, leaving the groups still arguing on the road.

"Him all go Halifax catch green spiders!" announced Rabbit complacently as he ranged alongside.

"I sincerely hope they get 'em," was Hayes' comment, uttered with vindictive simplicity of language.

"The Master-of-the-sword is justly angry," remarked the caid as they cantered along, "but he may always rely upon the friendship of Absalom ben Elkhie. Allah hath made men as they are."

As Hayes thanked him, and wondered anew at the strange character of the man who seemed to change like a chameleon from greed to chivalry and back again at each breath of circumstances, came Red-beard upon the other side.

"By Allah, Red *Roumi*, Es-Sid speaks truly! And upon me, thy red brother, canst thou rest thy gun! Even yet, if Allah wills, shall we tickle the Master-of-the-little-dog!"

X



THEY halted for half an hour to breathe the animals, although at Hayes' instigation—for the Moor will ride his beast to death—and had a

snack. Then as the sky was filled from one horizon to the other with flaming scarlet, gold and blue to the green of sap, they cantered 'round a band of a ravine upon a small village edged against the blue-earthed hillside and saw seated upon a camp stool a man in European dress.

Black-beard was the first to give tongue with mighty yell—

"For Allah and Sidi Mahmud!"

As they swept across a strip of barley field and on to the green before the village a scatter of shots rang out from the charging Moors; then with another united yell they drew their swords. Men were running from the village. Shots sang wide over their heads. Hayes saw the tiny form of Kismet yapping wildly. The small figure of the baron did not rise from his stool, but his automatic spat. Hayes felt the man directly behind him pitch from his saddle.

The next moment they were upon them. But Hayes had seen a shrouded figure dart from a hut. The baron became non-existent to him. He swerved violently through the crowd, nearly unseating Rabbit. She turned and dropped the veil upon her face as she flung up her arms toward him. He grabbed the slim figure beneath the shoulder and heaved her on to the pommel without stopping.

He heard the sound of conflict and the sharp *zip* of a modern bullet past his ear as Ramah whispered—

"Flee, O *Aziz* (beloved), for the son of a pig hath nigh fifty men with him!"

Unconscious of the superlative endearment, he grasped the import of her warning as he saw a body of men rushing to the fight from the other side of the village. He wheeled around away from them and in the direction of the village. Bending low over Ramah he rammed in his spurs. As they went past the group fighting at a racing speed he yelled a warning and caught a glimpse of the baron in the center of the throng.

"Straight on up the road to Fez!" commanded Ramah.

As he swerved on to the trail he looked back and saw that Rabbit and the men had seen the onrushing reinforcements as well as his own flight, for they were drawing off. But farther on another backward glimpse revealed a new party of horsemen riding like a whirlwind to inter-

cept Rabbit and his men from the Fez side of the road. He was cut off.

The freeing of the baron's party from the conflict let loose a shower of shots after him which zipped and frisked in the dust around him. Came another. His animal bounded in the air.

"Oh, my ——!" swore Hayes. "They've winged me!"

But the animal fell into stride again and raced on. Yet Hayes knew that the beast was wounded and might collapse at any moment.

'Round the shoulder of a hill which shut out the pursuers he drew in the horse to a hand gallop and attempted to make Ramah more comfortable.

"Care not for me, O *Aziz*!" she whispered. "Ride light that paradise be not shut upon us!"

This time Hayes did notice the superlative and flushed, but in response his arm tightened about her. Her advice indeed was sound technique, for the brute was heavy burdened with Ramah's weight in addition to the red giant. He began to ponder what he should do, for they could not continue at this pace all the way to Fez; long before then the baron's men would ride them down. Even as he considered a spatter of shots peppered the air above his head.

The one hope of escape lay in holding out until darkness protected them; even then the way would be difficult, for he doubted whether Ramah knew the hills of this district as she did those of her mountain home. He looked back again to calculate what start they had of their pursuers. Allowing for the violet glow of twilight they could not be more than a half mile behind, in spite of the advantage gained in the first rush by the swiftness of his, or rather Ramah's, speedy stallion.

The strain of lifting Ramah into the saddle had opened his wound. But, strange to say, the smarting pain which was beginning to penetrate above the excitement and to weary him, vanished when she murmured:

"Allah hath been good to me! For hath he not given me unto the arms of my beloved?" He felt the moist warmth of her lips upon his neck as he held her. "Thou art my prince, O my lord, and I am thy humble slave, whose heart sings as the lark above the fields when the sun is not yet high!"

The red giant bent his head until his lips touched the coarse cloth of the hood as they thundered on into the violet deepening to sapphire.

"*Waalil* Thy words caress not mine ears, O my lord!" whispered Ramah impatiently.

"When the dam is choked the waters run not," he responded, slightly startled at the Celt within him.

"Praise be to Allah that I am blessed! Honey and milk is not so sweet to my soul as the music of thy voice, O my lord!"

As mutely Hayes tightened his grip upon her lithe waist another spatter of shots brought them back to adventurous reality. He glanced behind. They had left the hills and were crossing flat open country; but the mass of the riders was almost lost in the gathering night.

"Are they near, O *Aziz*?"

"Nay, but yet not far, O little one. Soon will they be eaten up by the night."

"Allah! Verily thy breath intoxicates my soul so that I am in paradise and forget the jackals of the field that would yap at the portals of heaven!" quoth Ramah. "Listen, O *Aziz*, we should be now nigh unto the Wad Warga, for this is a plain. When the evil beasts are wrapped in the shadow of Allah let us then turn away to the right or to the left, whichever seemeth good to thee. I know not this country of the Moorish dogs, but Allah will guide us to a place in which to win across the river."

"Allah hath touched thy tongue!" said Hayes, quoting a proverb regarding one who speaks the truth.

He could feel the flagging of the horse and, knowing that the willing animal could not last much longer, set spurs, hoping to gain the few yards which might mean the shadow line between capture and escape. The game beast spurted splendidly for some few hundred yards, but either his previous work or the wound, and Hayes could not tell how serious it was, was telling upon him. Remorselessly Hayes plied spur again and again and nursed him in the desperate race.

"Look, O *Aziz*!" said Ramah as she heaved in his arms under the motion of the horse. "The eyes of Allah are bright tonight. Verily he laugheth at the hyena baying our love!" She was silent for a moment as they thundered on in the sapphire darkness. Then nestling closer

to his shoulder, she said as if intoxicated: "My love is like a poppy bursting in the sun of thy desire! Oh, the million scarlet joys within the cornfield of thy arms!"



A GLANCE behind failed to reveal any sign of the pursuers. He swerved off to the left through a barley field, choosing that direction because it was nearer to Fez, and drew in the animal to an easy canter so that the sound of hoofs would not be audible enough to reveal the trail, hoping that the thunder of their own beasts would aid to cover their escape. Unluckily, a few hundred yards farther on they came upon an outcrop of stone upon which the hoofs seemed to ring like a broadside of artillery. He pulled up to a walk and to listen.

The thrum of galloping horses sounded clearly on the warm, still air. They walked across the patch, which was despairingly long. The horse was badly blown. The heave of his lungs gave warning that he could not last much longer. A cruel roweling was necessary even to force him into a labored canter again.

At last under the dim light of the "eyes of Allah," as Ramah had called the stars, they saw the gleam of water. But when they arrived at the bank they discovered that it was a sheer fall of fifteen feet or more, for the river in the upper reaches runs through higher ground, narrow and deeper.

Hayes drew in again to listen. He could not catch any sound of hoofs, which suggested that the baron's men had stopped and were either seeking the fugitive's trail, or had found it and were following through the barley field. Peering over the edge of the bank Hayes could see the glimmer of stones. The horse was standing with his head down. His heaving flanks sobbed ominously.

"Further along," whispered Ramah, "Mohammed will aid us!"

"May Saint Patrick chase him as he chased the snakes!" murmured Hayes thinking of Rabbit, as he urged the horse along.

"What dost thou say, O *Aziz*?" inquired Ramah.

"I did but say a prayer, little one," said Hayes grimly.

"By prayer are all things done," she murmured. "Did I not pray to Allah for thee, O my beloved?"

"Oh, my lordy!" muttered Hayes.

They plodded on looking for a passage. A bend of the river brought the water right beneath them. They heard the distinct thud of hoofs close at hand. Hayes glanced back and saw a dim, moving mass against the silver glimmer of the distant water.

"They've missed the trail and cut along the river bank!" he thought.

He urged the sobbing animal along. He sought desperately a way down to the river. The brute was too exhausted to contemplate the possibility of riding away; could not even summon strength beneath a bloodied spur to canter. A bad stumble and the increase of the thud of hoofs quickened his mind. He pulled up whispering—

"We must swim for it!"

"I can not swim," murmured Ramah, the mountain girl, as he lowered her from the saddle.

"I can take thee if thou wilt rest tranquil," said Hayes swinging to the ground.

"I would die quietly in thy arms, O *Aziz!*" she whispered.

Hayes gave the beast a hearty smack on the quarters, but he merely snorted, took one step and stood with head down, foam glimmering in the starlight from his quivering nostrils. They ran on along the edge of the bank. No sign of a path could they see. The thunder of hoofs forced action. Ramah took off the *haik* and robe. He took her in his arms, sat down, and slid over the edge. While not quite sheer, the drop was so steep and the ground was so soft that his hold slipped. They rolled over and over and hit the water with a splash.

With eyes and mouth full of mud and sand he came up with Ramah in his arms gasping. But true to her word she did not struggle. He rolled her upon her back and grasping her shoulders began to float with the stream under the shadow of the bank, listening for sounds of his pursuers passing.

Presently they galloped by. But immediately afterward a shout informed him that they had found his horse. He regretted that he had not had the foresight to force the beast into the river to hide his tracks. Also he perceived that now he would have to attempt the passage for the current was sweeping out into the middle of the river.

With a murmured word of encourage-

ment to Ramah he began strong leg strokes toward the opposite bank. As they drew into the middle, gliding sidewise with the stream, they saw the silhouettes of some twenty or more horsemen against the stars, but he could not distinguish the baron. The party turned and began to ride slowly down the bank, scanning the water.

Hayes swam steadily on with his eyes on the bank. By stretching back his head he could not yet see the gloom of the opposite bank, but he knew more or less that the stream was deep and not very wide. Then what he was waiting for, happened. From the group riding on the bank went up a shout galvanizing Hayes' legs into more vigorous strokes. He steered a little more up-stream to reduce the oblique angle of progress. For a moment the horsemen stood apparently discussing what they would do. Would they take to the water after him, wondered Hayes. He thought not, for the bank was steep and few Moors care for swimming adventures. Then he saw the long Moorish rifles go out as some others of them began to race down the stream, evidently making for a crossing to cut off the quarry.

A cluster of red spears darted against the blue stars. The rippling cracks seemed to reach his ears at the same time that the water was flayed down-stream of them. Volleys followed in rapid succession; but fortunately the Moorish rifle is not an accurate weapon and a floating blob upon the water in starlight no easy mark. The Moors dismounted and knelt. Coveys of shots hit around him, some ricocheting right over them.

Hayes gurgled curses as he realized that Ramah was, naturally, before him; that he could not possibly swim in such a position as to shield her body with his own. Frantically he swam, stretching an anxious head backward in the attempt to find the protecting shadow of the bank. Some of the Moors, evidently dissatisfied with their marksmanship, moved farther down-stream and took to shooting up against the stars. The water seemed to dance with singing, frisking bullets. Each moment he expected to feel Ramah's lithe body jump or quiver at the impact of a hit.

Hours it seemed of frantic struggle before the gloom of the bank slowly drew a veil over them. The shots continued, but grew

wider and more erratic. Almost immediately Hayes, kicking down, felt bottom. He stood up and lifted Ramah to her feet. Slowly, to avoid splashing, they made their way to the beach. The water appeared to have eased the smarting of Hayes' wound although his side ached abominably after the exertion.

The Moors, plainly silhouetted across the river, had ceased firing. Hayes rested his automatic upon an arm gripping Ramah's shoulder, and fired. An answering yell, whether of rage or registering a hit, he could not determine, went up, and immediately followed a scattering volley at the flash of his shot.

"Fool thing to do," growled Hayes. "I might be a durned tenderfoot! Anyway the gun's all right."

They whispered as he rested for a moment, consulting which way they should attempt to go; but as either way seemed the same, they went up-stream, hugging the bank as much as possible. Momentarily they expected the party which had raced down-stream to the ford to appear above them. As they plodded along they watched the Moors, who after another blind volley spread out up and down-stream, obviously with the intention of watching the line of the opposite bank against the stars.

At last fortune or Mohammed seemed to favor the fugitives, for they came upon a washout. Up this gulley they scurried, taking every care not to get their heads above the sky-line. The gully indeed ran quite a quarter of a mile inland from the bank, growing narrower and shallower as it progressed. Presently they saw the myriad points of barley heads like a host of lances against the stars. Cautiously, on hands and knees, they crawled into the field, clambering on and on until they reached a slight hollow. As they lay down they heard guttural voices approach and gradually fade in the distance.

XI

 WHEN the spears of barley thrust the crimson moon Hayes and Ramah were still lying crouched in the hollow. They dared not stand up. In the gently undulating plain they could be seen for miles; and they could not continue crawling, even slowly. In that forest of

stems they had lost the sense of direction. Hayes too was glad to rest, for the exertion of that burdened swim had tired his strength.

They dared not talk above a slight whisper for they knew not how near one of their pursuers might be and indeed when at length Hayes did cautiously raise his bare head to the level of the barley-ears he saw cameoed in sepia against the moon the figure of a solitary horseman, motionless, his long gun protruding beyond the hood.

As they crouched flat they heard the voice of another man, calling. Peeping again, Hayes saw half a dozen riders advancing across the field from the river in open order toward the sentinel beneath the moon. Evidently, reflected Hayes, they had discovered or had reckoned where the fugitives had taken to cover. He feared that they might in the growing light find the trail.

The men did not seem to care whether their voices might carry a warning or not for they chatted and laughed until their words were distinct, as the riders on the left wing of the drive passed within ten yards of the fugitives.

"*Yillah!*" replied one in reply to a remark from a companion. "There is but little sport in partridge hunting by moonlight."

"We will never flush the birds like this, by the beard of Mulai Idrees!" growled another.

"*Subhan Allah!*" sang out a man on the wing. "Would that we had my falcon! We might see some pretty sport."

"*Tsch!*" scoffed another. "Thy falcon is as blind by night as thou art!"

The voices became indistinct. They passed. Hayes raised his head again as he heard them hailing some one. The sentinel was riding to meet them and to the right and left of him were others.

"They put those other brigands to bag us when they flushed us, dern their merry sporting souls!" muttered Hayes. "But maybe they'll tire and go away."

His surmise proved correct, for after a long discussion the party turned and cantered off in the direction of down-stream. Kneeling, Hayes watched them until they were far enough off to be unable to distinguish a head and shoulders against the barley. For a moment the idea that the retirement might be a feint to make him reveal himself to others in hiding, arrested

his movement. But he thought not; anyway they would have to take a chance, for the Moors would probably resume the hunt in the morning.

He stood up and took a survey of the position. The plain stretched away like a rolling ocean to the hills from which they had come on the other side of the river; but indistinct under the moon he could make out more hills which he knew ought to be there, hills which separated the valleys of the Wad Fez and Wad Warga. If they could reach them they might have a chance to get to Fez. How far the hills were he could not determine.

They made a start immediately, stooping as much as possible. But on the top of the first wave of the ground they could see distinctly the band of their pursuers galloping toward a misty village in the distance. After that they straightened up and, in single file, so that Hayes could break the path, walked as fast as Ramah could manage her small step. Fortunately as the moon rose they could see that the hills of succor were not so far as they had imagined.

But progress through the waist-high barley was slow, laborious and tiring. Despite Ramah's protest Hayes picked her up, deriving some strange strength from the touch of those slender arms about his neck. However for the second spell, Ramah climbed up on his back pig-a-back fashion, for greater ease to him. And so with her lithe figure wrapped around him, her hair trailing over his shoulders, the red giant plunged on, across hollows and rises, patches of stony, fallow ground and dry courses of streams, on and on toward the moon.

The absinthe of the dawn was warring with the jade of the moon when at length they reached the shelter of trees at the foot of the hills. With the exertions of the night his wound had become extremely painful. He sank down at the bole of a cork tree and held his aching head between his hands.

"Thou art weary, O blessed one!" cried Ramah anxiously, as she squatted beside him, knowing nothing of his wound. "Listen, beloved, let us go deeper a little into the wood and thou shalt sleep while I keep watch beside thee!"

Hayes nodded. He saw the wisdom of her suggestion and felt that if he did not

have rest that he would be useless in any emergency. He rose. With Ramah trying to support his shoulder they walked another fifty yards. In a small thicket they sat again. Just as he was lying down he bethought himself of surprises. He sat up and drew out his automatic.

"Listen, little one," he said wearily, "mayhap some one may come upon us suddenly, and I may be heavy with sleep. But if thou canst fire, the shot will awaken me more quickly even than the music of thy voice."

Ramah, apt to grasp an idea, rapidly mastered the rough idea of the mechanism. As he stretched out with a sigh of relief on the soft sward she caught and raised his head. He smiled dully and was asleep before his head was pillowed upon her lap where, revolver in one hand and the other caressing his tousled red hair, she sat on guard.

When he awoke the sun had passed the meridian. For a moment he had forgotten where he was. He sat up.

"For the love of Mike and Mister—Oh!" he exclaimed, blinking at Ramah. Through the interstices of the mass of hair Ramah's great eyes were reproachful. "I did but dream, O *Azizah!*" added Hayes quite unconsciously using the superlative.

"Thy soul was with Allah," explained Ramah, caressing his hand.

Revitalized by the sleep and rest, Hayes gazed at her with new eyes, aware of and drinking in, her beauty.

"Verily," said the Celt, using his lips, "thine eyes are as beautiful as storks against a sunset!"

But in spite of the awakening of the romantic strain a prosaic fact thrust itself forward.

"By the left hind leg of the sacred cat of Colorado! I could do with a drink as long as a camel's neck!" he exclaimed. "My throat is as parched as the well of Gizah in Summer time."

"*Waalil Waalil* Wo is me," wailed Ramah, "that Allah will not permit his slave to satisfy my lord!"



IN THESE bare hills around Fez there was no hope of getting water at that period of the year, except on the trail where there were some brackish wells which they dared not seek afoot. However, Ramah, the mountain and desert

girl, grubbed around in the soil until she found a small, smooth stone which she bade the Red *Roumi* to place within his mouth and which gave relief.

Neither Ramah nor Hayes had any precise idea of the distance from Fez except that the city was upon the other side of these hills, and about five hours march of a caravan. On prospecting from the edge of the copse they saw that they were not far from some local trail, for they saw people on donkeys and mules passing in either direction, and far away to the right below an olive plantation some women bearing piles of faggots upon their backs. Perforce they must remain where they were until the cover of darkness.

So it was that under the mottled shade of that old cork tree Ramah the Berber maid spun the golden threads of love until the meeting of her moist young mouth upon the cracked and red stubbled lips of the Irish giant sealed the cocoon of her desire. And truth to tell, Mad Jack Hayes, wanderer of the seven seas and many more lands, was not averse; for, though he never knew, beneath the roistering manner had clamored for many a year the instinct of the ages. But love in Morocco is a febrile thing full shot with many an arrow.

For as they sat quenching their thirst upon each other's lips the sound of hoofs broke in upon their paradise. Hayes gripped his automatic and sprang in front of Ramah. There was no one in sight within the trees, but on peering cautiously beyond he saw a single horseman approaching. Instantly Hayes perceived an aid to escape.

He considered. The man was riding 'round the fringe of the wood evidently bound for some village not far beyond from whence the women had come. He would pass within easy shot. Hayes did not like the idea of shooting the fellow from an ambush and of course the horse must be uninjured. He decided swiftly. That animal he must have. He bade Ramah to lie quietly in the bush and, crawling forward, took up a position under a shrub.

Unconcernedly the fellow in white *silham* and *tarboosh*, the slender rifle across his knees, came cantering along. By some chance—or maybe his fate was written—he pulled in toward the bush under which Hayes crouched. As he was abreast Hayes

sprang out under the horse's head and seized the bridle, thrusting the revolver up as he shouted in Arabic—

"Surrender!"

"*Subhan Allah!*"

Possibly not comprehending the deadly, small thing in the infidel's hand, the youth drew a dagger. Hayes was compelled to fire. The man uttered a sob and slid quietly out of the saddle as the horse bounded in affright. As Hayes stood controlling the prize, a fine powerful beast, Ramah came rushing out. While she held him Hayes examined the fallen man. He was quite dead, for the bullet had gone upward through the heart.

Hayes dragged the body into the bush and looked around. Some way out a party on donkeys had evidently heard the shot, for they had halted and were looking over. In spite of the fact that little episodes of that character are not very disturbing in Morocco, Hayes decided that no time was to be lost. He mounted and swung Ramah up behind him. Once more the pair rode off to freedom.

The time was about three o'clock when they started; judging by the sun, for Hayes had lost his watch at the gentle hands of Red-Beard or his friends. By hard riding they might reach Fez before the great gates closed at sundown. Of hotels, of course, there was none; nor was there as far as Hayes knew an American consul in Fez, but he would be able to secure assistance from either the British or French Consulate. He would have to make some arrangements for Ramah as well, for her relative the *sherif*, as he had suspected at one time, and as she had confessed adorably and craved forgiveness for, had never left the sacred city of Wazzan for all she had heard. In any case it would be better than spending another night starving in the wilderness.

They made a stork's flight over the hills in the direction in which they knew vaguely the Fez road to be, avoiding any signs of habitation. Once they halted to rest and to gather some figs within the borders of an olive plantation, which served to quench their thirst and hunger a little.

When the sun appeared to be about two hours from the horizon they came upon an unmistakable trail which wound in and out of the hills revealing here and there the blues and greens of phosphates which

aroused Hayes's professional interest so much that he was compelled to stop for a hurried examination. The result, in conjunction with his observation of the soil on the road from the coast, caused him to wonder little why certain powers were somewhat greedy for such a promising land.

They had cantered and walked steadily for about an hour when rounding a corner they saw grouped around a water-pool by the wayside some five or six tribesmen. Hayes was just tightening rein to consider what they should do when he caught sight of a little dog which ran across the dusty road. Kismet!

On the instant he realized that he had stumbled on the baron and his men. Calling to Ramah to hold tighter, he rammed in the spurs. They raced past the group at Powder Play speed and on up the road. But he had caught a glimpse of men running to their horses and guns and of a slight figure in European clothes rising from a seat in the shade.

The sharp *crack-crack* of an automatic reverberated among the hills and the bullets sang through the cloud of dust about them. For fifty yards the road held straight and then swerved between the hills. Just as they swept 'round the corner Hayes glanced back. Already several men were swinging into their saddles.

"For the love of Mike and Colonel Roosevelt!" muttered Hayes. "That hawk-nosed spy has the luck of his master! But this time, friend baron, we have a fresh horse!"

At the same pace they continued on, clattering over the rocky ground where the trail crosses to the other side of the little valley and winds along the side of steep rock. Every now and again as he glanced back he could see the dust of the pursuers.

"Mohammed will aid us, O *Aziz*!" whispered Ramah from behind.

"Thunder and purple snakes, but I'd sooner have Rabbit and his lambs!" muttered Hayes.

 FOR twenty minutes or more they appeared to hold their own. Upon a good piece of going they were undoubtedly gaining ground. They saw in front of them a broad track running through the cool green of an olive plantation on a slight rise which led, as Hayes had heard from Rabbit, on to the plain of the

Wad Fez with the city just beneath. Another glance showed the pursuers still out of sight around the corner. Then came heavy sand.

Hayes cursed and, seeing that the whole of the road looked the same, swerved for the plantation. As they entered, Ramah, looking behind, cried out that the baron's party had seen them. Bending low to dodge boughs, propping the horse to avoid clumps of thicket, they thundered on with a yell echoing in their ears. Amid the olive trees they lost sight of the crowd, but they knew they were hot on the trail. Hayes tried to steer through the plantation on more or less a parallel with the road in order to come out above Fez.

Unexpectedly they hit the road again, which happened to be good going. As they raced on Hayes heard a distant yell and saw another party of horsemen break cover from an olive-clad hill to their left; and right in front of them upon the road was a great crowd of people with banners of scarlet, green, yellow, and blue. The next moment Hayes struck sand once more, but sand that stretched far on either side. From behind came a triumphant yell as the horse floundered and slowed down. They neared the mass of people with banners.

"*Aissouwa*!" shouted Ramah in his ear. "Ride through them, O *Aziz*, for they are holy men and would kill all infidels!"

"Thunder and purple lightning!" roared Hayes. "The devil's own broods 're let loose this bright day!"

He roweled the poor beast's bloodied flanks. But the sand grew heavier. Ahead the crowd of half-naked fanatics, newly drunk with drafts of religion at the great Mosque of Mulai Indrees, chanted and danced around their sacred banners. Hayes glanced behind. The baron was leading his men by a long way upon a big, black beast and had made great gains; was within two hundred yards. The second party to the left seemed to have redoubled their efforts and were riding with their horses' bellies to the ground. The *Aissouwa* were within fifty yards.

"If only I can get through these holy animals perhaps they'll hold up the baron, if I have any luck! Saint Patrick and all his blessed snakes do help me!" prayed Hayes.

He glanced behind him again. The

baron was kneeling in the road and with his automatic in the crook of his arm was taking a long shot. Hayes heard the crack and listened for the bullet. The answer was a convulsive bound beneath him. He pulled frantically at the bridle. The beast raced forward and fell, throwing his riders almost at the feet of the first line of the *Aïssouwa*.

Amid a babel of yells and cries he scrambled up and pulled Ramah to her feet. Both were uninjured. The horse lay dead. As Hayes dragged Ramah behind the corpse a burly fanatic with shaven head and bare torso wielding a kind of trident in his hand, came plunging at him yelling:

"Infidel! Kill! Kill!"

Hayes fired. The man crumpled up and pitched at his feet. Amid renewed yells and howls of "Kill! Mulai Idress! Kill!" the mob came on with knives and hatchets. Hayes emptied his automatic. He had no time to reload but dropped the gun behind him and some cartridge-clips, shouting to Ramah: "Shoot!" as he drew his scimitar. Three yelling maniacs charged together. A terrific right cut hewed through the shoulder of one, the return slash nearly severed the neck of the next, and a thrust dropped the third.

Mad Jack Hayes' "brigan' soul" ran amuck with the spirit of a thousand generations of fighting Irishmen as he cut and slashed, thrust and hewed to the roaring of strange oaths by sacred cats and crab-nosed pikers, by the devil and all the saints. He heard not the thunder of galloping hoofs, the shot from Ramah's tiny hands which brought the baron headlong to the dust; nor knew anything save that glorious tumbling sea of wild eyes and brown bodies spurting blood and yells.

Then suddenly he was lifted from behind. He fought furiously. Powerful arms raised him beside the flank of a galloping horse as a familiar voice shouted:

"Swing thyself into the saddle, O Master-of-the-Sword!"

But when he saw the great beard of Caid Absalom above him he gasped—

"Ramah!"

"The daughter of the sheik rideth with thy red brother yonder," answered the caid.

Then did Hayes drop the scimitar and, catching a foot in the stirrup, hoist himself behind the caid, where, immediately he saw a strange sight. Galloping along in the midst of his "lambs" was Rabbit holding by the clothes in the right hand a strange form which swayed and pawed in the air like a captured crab; and as Hayes looked Rabbit, with a swing, hoisted the slight form of the baron across his saddle bow.

"Hullo, ole chap!" shouted Rabbit, grinning as he raced alongside. "We have fight. Oh, boy! Then we come look for you an' watch road. Mohammed he 'pent an' sen' you 'long. Fine! Same I tell you I napkid baron for my fren', whaat?" and with the words his fingers descended upon the hapless captive's ribs evoking an astonished "*Ouww*" which drew a mighty gust of laughter.

Half a mile beyond, out of reach of the yelling and chanting holy men, whom no Arab would dare to attack, the cavalcade drew rein. Sliding from the saddle of Red-beard, Ramah ran to Hayes, crying as she kissed his hand—

"Praise be to Allah the All Merciful, the All Compassionate, and Mohammed his prophet, who have saved thee for his slave!"

Statuesque upon his horse with one hand across the baron's back sat Rabbit, silhouetted against the city of Fez within gray walls and embrasured towers of a thousand years, tinted in the rose glow of sunset, sprawling like a tired white camel over the flat plain.

"One wife he catch you, huh?" he remarked nonchalantly. "Mohammed he say—"

"Rabbit!" shouted Hayes, laughing.

"Damfool once, damfool two times," he persisted, "damfool always!"





Author of "The Better Mixer," "Circular 473," etc.

WHEN Trainmaster Beason entered the office of Superintendent Kenley, of the South Coast Line, he found Kenley conversing with Leland, a traffic man from one of the Northern roads.

Beason's face looked somewhat worried as he came in, and after the three had exchanged greetings the superintendent alluded to it.

"Something bothering you, Beason?" asked Kenley. "You look as if you're about midway between swearing and kicking the furniture. What is it?"

"I am, just that! And what it is, is plenty!" Beason selected a chair and sat down with a grunt. "The Huskies are at it again!" he said briefly.

"The devil!" Kenley at once became all attention. "What are they up to now? What have they done?"

"That brute of a yardmaster, Mossbeck, down at Pinefield, called his gang together and they put a new brakeman through the mill," said Beason. "Broke three of his ribs, blackened both his eyes and bruised him up generally. He'll not be able to report for duty for a month—and men scarce as hen's teeth as it is." The trainmaster made a gesture of supreme irritation. "It makes me sick!"

"Who was the brakeman?" asked Kenley.

"A new man named Crosby. He'd just finished his trial trips to learn the road and had worked one day on the local freight. When he got into Pinefield, Mossbeck,

knowing he was a new man, tried to ride him. Crosby wouldn't stand for it. So last night Mossbeck called his Huskies together and they gave Crosby the works. It's a rotten shame."

"By George, it is!" exclaimed Kenley. He drummed on the top of his desk with quick, nervous fingers, frowning meanwhile. "We'll have to put a stop to this business, come what will." His voice was firm, decided.

Leland, the traffic man from up North, had been listening, silently but attentively.

"Who, or what, are the Huskies?" he now ventured. "What you've been saying has aroused my curiosity. But so far it's all Greek to me."

Kenley ceased his drumming.

"It's a sort of fraternity among some of the men on the South Coast," he explained, "a fraternity which originally was mildly harmless. But of late it has been manipulated into something quite aside from its original purpose."

"And what was the original purpose?" inquired Leland.

"To keep the boys in line—to do their duty, I mean. If one of them attempted to shirk or get away with any raw stuff, a bunch of the Huskies would take hold of him and give him a degree. Mostly horseplay it was—a lot of nonsense that did no real harm and, in fact, oftentimes did some good. So we winked at it and made no serious objections to their carryings-on.

"But like a lot of things that start out

inoffensively enough, the Huskies have strayed from probable good to indubitable evil. They have become a means of intimidation, of bullying. The Chief Husky, as he is called, practically controls them. At his call they meet, nab the victim he designates and give said victim a thorough going-over—as witness the case of Brake-man Crosby.

"A year since the yardmaster at Pinefield—Mossbeck—became the Chief Husky; and he certainly has been carrying things on with a high hand. No effort has been made to confine the Huskies' activities to things that make for the good of the South Coast. He uses his powers to bully and punish any one on the road who runs foul of his own wishes, or those of his friends."

"Well!" ejaculated Leland. "I'd soon fix that. Why not get rid of him?"

Kenley frowned again.

"I've had that in mind," he said slowly, "several times." He hesitated, and then resumed. "You see, outside of his domineering arrogance Mossbeck is a pretty good yardmaster; and a good yardmaster is not picked up every day—not just now, anyway. Then, too, Mossbeck has his influence—I'll be frank about that. If we'd fire him outright it'd more than likely stir up some feeling among his buddies, and we're not looking for anything like that just at this time, when business is so heavy. I—we—have been hoping that affairs would take a turn for the better with the Huskies. But it's been a faint hope, I'll confess. We've been fearful that some strong action would have to be taken. I guess that time has come."

"I'd say so!" observed Leland with feeling. "When it comes to smashing a man's ribs and things like that matters have gone far enough, to my mind."

"I forgot to tell you that this man Crosby has a pal who came with him from somewhere up North—Montana, I believe—an operator named Reilly who's working second trick in Pinefield yard office. Perhaps he was in here to see you about a job."

"Yes," replied Kenley; "I remember sending him down there. A young chap."

"That's the boy," said Beason. "Well," he continued, "just before I got on the train this A.M. I met him."

"What's this I hear about Crosby?" he asked me.

"So I told him what I knew about what

the Huskies had done to his friend. He listened quietly enough; but by the time I had finished I saw that something was working within him.

"All right, thanks," he said to me; and then he started to refer to Mossbeck. 'The great big, dirty-faced, sneaking cur! So that's the way he works it 'round here! Well, we'll see!' And away he went, without another word.

"You can believe me or not," concluded Beason, "but there was something so utterly, so deadly cold and certain about young Reilly's words and manner that I almost shivered. If I'd been Mossbeck I know I would have."

Kenley shook his head.

"He's just one man," said the superintendent, "and one man against Mossbeck is worse than useless. The yardmaster and his gang'll simply eat him up. I guess before something more does happen I'd better run down to Pinefield and see what can be done. If Mossbeck won't listen to reason I'll have to give him the bounce—and take a chance on what will follow."

II



"NEVER you mind, Danny," said young Joe Reilly. "I'll attend to Mr. Mossbeck's case."

The youthful Danny Crosby screwed his battered visage into what was meant for a grin.

"Nothing rash, Joe," he protested, "nothing rash! I'm figuring on looking after Mossbeck myself—after I get straightened out again."

He twisted impatiently on his bed, then smothered a groan as the pain from his injured ribs swept over him.

Joe Reilly heard the smothered groan.

"Sure!" he said, his voice grim. "You can do that, too. But while you're getting straightened out I'm aiming to get in first. Mossbeck's is a case that won't bear waiting. He's got to be shown now, right off."

Danny regarded him affectionately.

"If I didn't know how useless it would be I'd keep on protesting against your taking a hand. But I know I can't persuade you. Only, be careful!"

Joe rose from his chair and took up his hat. He hadn't smiled much today, which was not like him. Danny had noticed it; it was a bad sign, for somebody, he knew.

"I'll be as careful," said Joe, "as I can."

He moved toward the door.

"Come and tell me about it," said Danny.

"I'll tell you," promised Joe, and went out.

 IT LACKED exactly two minutes of three o'clock, P.M., when Joe Reilly came to the big frame building set in the middle of Pinefield yards, and wherein was located the telegraph office, yardmaster's headquarters and trainmen's room—this latter the room where the trainmen gathered preparatory to taking out their runs. Joe was hurrying, for he went on duty at three o'clock.

Just outside the door he met big Mossbeck, the yardmaster, emerging from his own office. The day was warm and a number of trainmen lounged about outside, some on benches and others leaning against the weather-boarding.

Joe paused abruptly as he came face to face with the yardmaster.

"This is a free country, Mossbeck!" he said, his words clear-cut and snapping. "No man is compelled to submit tamely while a bunch of sneaks like you and your Huskies beat him up. Do you get me?"

The big face of the yardmaster at first had expressed surprise at Reilly's words. But now a smug smile, the reflection of conscious power, crossed his countenance.

"Oh, oh!" he sneered. "So that's it! I'd heard you were a friend of poor Crosby's." An evil light came into Mossbeck's eyes. "Keep your shirt on, you fire-eater! Your turn will be next."

The trainmen near by sat up alertly. This was something new—bearding Mossbeck in his very den.

"If I had time," declared the undisturbed Joe, "my turn would be right now—and yours, too! But I'm due on the job now, so I can't wait. But I've time for this."

He swung his right hand, open-palmed. Driven with force, it smacked against Mossbeck's cheek with a report like the crack of a pistol. Mossbeck stepped back, his cheek burning in one big fiery-red spot.

"That's only to impress it on you," pursued Joe evenly. "The real work will follow at my first opportunity. If you're around here when I come off duty at eleven tonight it will be then. If not, then at the first chance afterward. And when it does

come it will be plenty. I'm warning you!"

Mossbeck had recovered enough from the slap on the cheek to find his voice. The knowledge that his present discomfiture was being witnessed by others set him nearly wild. Oaths and hard names tumbled from his lips in a gushing stream.

"You—you——" he spluttered. "You'll get yours—you fire-eater—you fresh guy! I've seen your kind before, but we've always fixed 'em!" His voice rose to a perfect bellow. "Going to go over me, are you? All right, you—— We'll be waiting!"

"I notice you said 'we,'" prodded Joe. "I'm glad to hear it. I want you to get your gang. Gather 'em up, every one. Get 'em all together and bring 'em around. I never yet saw a bunch who worked like yours that wasn't pure yellow at the core."

The yardmaster simply shook with rage.

"I'll get 'em!" he roared. "I'll get 'em! We'll do you up right!"

"Beansoup!" said Joe disdainfully.

He turned and without more words entered the door that led to the telegraph office.

III

 THERE was a calling and a gathering of the Huskies that afternoon and evening. To all parts of the yard where the yardmen worked and to incoming crews Mossbeck sent the summons, sent it by word of mouth and by written notice delivered by messengers:

There will be a special session of the Huskies to-night at eleven o'clock. Meeting will be held in trainmen's room in main yard building. Do not fail to be present promptly on time. Special work to be done.

That was the summons. But it was delivered with discretion: Mossbeck's special cronies were the only ones to receive it. Whereat the special cronies smacked their lips. They knew that something extraordinary indeed must be on to call for this special meeting.

But even if Mossbeck desired only his intimates present—men whom he knew would not resent or criticize any needlessly rough work—the news of the call yet leaked out to other members of the Huskies; other members who might be classified as the mild element, men who did not take kindly to Mossbeck's arrogant brutality. These latter Huskies had been considerably stirred

up by the manhandling that had been given Crosby the evening before. Then, too, reports of Joe Reilly's defy of Mossbeck had been spread—spread by eye-witnesses of the encounter.

So here and there about Pinefield yard and station the mild Huskies commented over recent events; and when they touched on Reilly's bold course they plainly approved of that. Also the rumors of the night's special session were discussed—a session which by its very exclusiveness and secrecy betokened that some sinister events were on the program. That was not right, was the invariable conviction.

Hence it came about that different ones of the mild Huskies, unobtrusively discussing all phases of the matter, here and there assured one another that they'd be present too—present even if unsummoned, and plainly undesired. Mossbeck had long been running things with too heavy a hand. They'd be present at eleven o'clock—and they'd see what they'd see.

The hours from three to eleven passed quickly enough for Joe Reilly, busy at his wires. Traffic was heavy, consequently he had no time that dragged slowly on his hands. At various times a grinning trainman or yardman would stick his head in at the open window.

"Special session of the Huskies tonight!" the caller would say, and contort his face in a way that was intended to impress Joe with the fact that he should shake in his boots.

But Joe did not shake; and never by sign or word did he show that he paid the slightest heed to their observations.

Darkness came. The lights were lit, and the wide yard twinkled with myriad red and green lamps. A drizzle of rain set in; and through the drizzle, as the hour drew near eleven, men began to come, singly and in groups, gathering in the big room, next to the telegraph office, where the trainmen waited.

At ten-forty-five Mossbeck himself arrived. He entered and glanced about the well-filled room. He frowned as he noted that of the forty-odd Huskies gathered within at least fifteen were men who had been unsummoned.

Disdaining to greet the unwelcome ones, he strode arrogantly across the room and entered into a whispered conference with several of his immediate friends. More

scowling glances were cast at the unwanted fifteen. But the fifteen placidly ignored any affront they may have perceived, and stayed on.

At ten fifty-five Joe Reilly's relief, the third-trick operator, arrived. He entered the telegraph office through a door that opened into a small hallway—this door and hallway being on the opposite side of the office from the trainmen's room. And immediately after the third-trick man's entrance Joe heard a cautious hand fumbling around the door-knob.

Joe moved over and tried the door. It had been secured from the other side, thus insuring that his only means of departure would be through the trainmen's room. He was not surprised.

"Seems to be something doing," said the third-trick man, removing his coat and hanging it on a nail.

Joe already had put on his own coat. Now he put on his hat as he turned to go.

"You keep your eyes and ears open," he said to the third-trick man, "and maybe you'll notice something doing."

He opened the door opposite the one where the relief man had entered, stepped through the doorway and snapped the latch behind him.

Silence fell throughout the trainmen's room as Joe Reilly stepped through the doorway. From the spot where he paused to the outside door at the other end of the room a long double line of men stood, waiting and eager. At the head of the line, nearest Joe, stood Mossbeck.

To one side of the long double line, however, stood another group of men—the mild fifteen. From their attitude, or from their expression, in one swift intuitive glance Reilly sensed that this group was not altogether in sympathy with Mossbeck and his followers. That might help some, reflected Joe.

Standing at ease, he calmly looked over the gathering. Mossbeck was the first to speak.

"This is the bucko!" he cried. "Let's get started!"

Mossbeck took one step forward, his hand outstretched to grasp Joe.

"Come here!" cried the yardmaster. "We've several things to show you."

With a swift, smooth motion Joe Reilly's hands parted the front folds of his coat. Arms akimbo, his hands rested easily, one on each hip.

"Don't try it!" he said; and his voice though not loud, cut through the room like the lash of a whip. "You stop right where you are!"

He was looking at Mossbeck.

Mossbeck stopped. He did not know exactly why—but he stopped. There was a certain menace about the quiet figure in the doorway.

"That's better!" said Joe, perceiving that the yardmaster had halted. "Now listen! The first man who so much as lays a finger on me will not lay finger on another man for a long time—if ever. I hope you all get that straight."

He paused and glanced over the room.

"Go get him!" called a voice from the far end of the double line. "Don't let him bluff you!"

There was a stir from that direction. But Mossbeck and those in front hung back.

"He's got a gun!" This voice came from just behind the yardmaster; it was a very unenthusiastic voice.

"Gun, ——!" said the first man. "Grab him!"

"If the gentleman who's so anxious will kindly step out in front——" invited Joe.

A slight, hard grin curled his lips.

But the anxious gentleman appeared suddenly to lose his ambition. He did not step out in front; and from the ranks of the mild fifteen, over at the side, came a subdued snicker; this was rather different: entertainment from what they had bargained for—different, and better.



JOE heard the snicker and he favored the group with a quick flashing smile of appreciation. Then he swung his gaze back to Mossbeck and his men.

"I've a few words more," he said quickly. "If ever anything riled me from the bottom up, Mossbeck, it was the dirty way you and your gang here handled Crosby last night. Crosby is my friend, and I swore I'd show you and your so-called crowd of Huskies up for the yellow pups you are. And I'm going to do it, right now. I'm going to walk right down through you to the other side of the room; and if any man makes one move to touch me, remember my warning!"

Without an instant's hesitation Joe stepped forward. He passed the glaring

and fuming Mossbeck. He passed the next man, and the next—walking slowly down between the two lines of uncertain Huskies. He reached the outside door—and not a man had so much as offered to raise a hand against, or to detain, him.

At the door Joe turned and once more faced the roomful of silent Huskies.

"I could leave," he said, "if I wanted to. But I don't want to—not just yet. I want to walk back again—so I will."

And with the utmost calmness, and to their intense amazement, he returned, passing back among them to where he had first stood, at the inner doorway. There he whirled on his heel, again confronting them.

"I knew it!" he said, the thin, hard grin once more flitting over his face. "You're full of yellow, Mossbeck—you and your whole rotten gang!"

Not a word came from the yardmaster or his men. But from the fifteen dissenters the subdued snicker once more rippled forth irrepressibly.

"I take it," said Joe, to this group, "that you fellows don't altogether line up with Mossbeck and his crowd. Maybe you've got thoughts of your own. Am I right?"

"Lord, yes!" burst out a big engineer, standing in the forefront. "We've been suspecting for a long time that Mossy was mostly wind and no guts. Now we know it!"

A murmur of confirmation ran through the men with him.

"Then maybe you can help me a little," said Joe. "Because I'm going to prove it some more."

With a quick, deft twist he slid out of his coat. He tossed it over a bench.

"Now then, you Mossbeck sheep, step back against the wall at the other end of the room. Step back, I say—all but you, Mossbeck!"

There was a little hesitation. But the will-power of the man who gave the order was triumphant. Stumbling, muttering under their breath, the men addressed crowded to the far end of the room.

From a rear pocket Joe plucked a capable-looking automatic pistol. He extended it, butt first, toward the engineer with the mild fifteen.

"Will you be good enough to hold this and sort of keep that other bunch off while

I attend to a little other business?" said Joe affably.

The big engineer did not debate or delay in the least. He clasped the pistol.

"Sure!" he said. "I'll do that! Go right ahead with your business."

Joe turned to Mossbeck, still standing near by.

"Now then, Mossbeck," said Joe, "I'm going to hand you what I promised you this afternoon. Crosby had two black eyes and some broken ribs, besides some other little hurts. If you get out of here tonight with no more than that, you'll be lucky!"

IV

 THE train on which Superintendent Kenley journeyed to Pinefield was aggravatingly late. First the derailment of a freight ahead held it up, then a cracked cylinder on the passenger engine itself made for further delay. The train was due at Pinefield at 7 P.M. But it was almost exactly 11 P.M. when Kenley finally reached there.

He had decided—upon finding he would reach Pinefield so late—that he'd go to a hotel for the night and would then see Mossbeck the first thing in the morning. But when the superintendent stepped off the train at Pinefield the night ticket-agent spied him. The ticket man came running.

"Thank Heaven! I'm glad to see you here, Mr. Kenley!" said the N. T. A. excitedly. "Some of the Huskies are down at the yard office, laying for Reilly, the second-trick operator. After what happened last night I'm afraid they'll half kill him."

"Is Mossbeck there?" demanded Kenley swiftly.

Visions of more trouble rose up before him.

"Yes, I think so," replied the ticket agent. "They say Reilly defied him, and that Mossbeck has sworn to do him up proper. There's been a lot of talk going around this evening about it."

The superintendent gazed down toward the yard where the many switchlights blinked through the misty rain.

"All right," he said with sudden resolve, "I'll go down and see what I can do."

He pulled his hat down and turned his coat collar up against the drizzle, then hurried down the track.

A muffled thumping from within came to Kenley as he pressed against the train-

men's room door, a muffled thumping that convinced him his worst fears would be realized.

He pressed harder against the door. It seemed to be held in a sort of jam, as though men were crowded against it. But by determined effort he at length got it open a few inches.

"Open up!" Kenley called through the crack. "Open up!"

But no one seemed to pay the slightest heed to his call; and it was only by pure physical effort that he finally got the door open far enough to let him squeeze through into the room. Inside he paused a second, gathering his breath. A strange sight met his gaze.

Grouped about him was a cluster of some twenty-odd men, silent and absorbed in some action that was taking place near the center of the room. To one side of the room was another and smaller cluster of men, at their front big Engineer Dodds standing, a pistol in his hand.

But the strangest thing of all was in the center of the room, where two men were shifting about. One, Mossbeck, battered and reeling, parrying blindly with futile fists; the other, swift and lithe, apparently untouched, driving sledge-hammer blows past Mossbeck's guard.

"Stand aside!" cried Kenley, elbowing to the front. "Stand aside, you men!"

He pressed forward, and for the first time the Huskies about him appeared to become aware of his presence and to recognize the man with the pulled-down hat and turned-up collar.

"Kenley! It's Kenley!"

The whisper flashed among them. A little afraid all at once, they shrank aside to let him pass.

The superintendent drew near the two figures circling about the center of the room.

"Here!" he said sharply. "What's this?"

Out of the tail of his eye Joe Reilly had seen the superintendent coming.

"Just a second!" grunted Joe.

Pivoting on his left foot, he swung his right fist. The hard knuckles crunched into Mossbeck's face. Mossbeck dropped—and did not rise. He lay on the floor—quivering, helpless, beaten.

"I guess that'll be enough!" said Joe Reilly. There was great satisfaction in his voice. He turned to the superintendent. "And now—what is it?"

A roar shook the room—a roar from the mild fifteen. They crowded forward, Engineer Dodds leading.

"By the Whistling Annie!" boomed Dodds. "He's done it! He's done it!"

Kenley grasped the engineer's arm.

"Done what?" asked the bewildered superintendent.

"Done what!" roared Dodds. "Why, he's backed Mossbeck and the rest of his crew clear off the rails and over the bumper! He gave it out that he'd pay Mossbeck for what Crosby got—and he's done it!"

"Who—Reilly here?" But even as he said it Kenley knew it was a foolish question.

"Reilly—you bet!" exulted Dodds. He laid his hand on Joe's shoulder. "This is the lad! Mossbeck's a dead one! Long live Reilly!"

Kenley and Reilly faced each other an instant. A look passed between them—a look as man to man.

"You've done well, Reilly," said Kenley in a low voice.

And as an answering light of appreciation flashed into Joe's eyes, Kenley turned about and faced the men gathered near the outer door—Mossbeck's followers. Kenley had suddenly seen that a solution had been worked out for him. To put on the finishing touches he had but to strike while the iron was hot. He raised his hand for attention.

"This thing has gone quite far enough," said Kenley, his voice firm and incisive, "this thing of the Huskies. There must be no further happenings like that of last night, or tonight. I want you men to understand that, distinctly."

There was a confused movement among the men addressed, an uncomfortable stirring as of shame or indecision.

"They understand it, all right," assured Dodds loudly. "The Huskies are on the scrap pile! They're busted—dead!"

Mossbeck's men again stirred, glancing from their fallen, battered leader to Joe Reilly, to Kenley, to Dodds and the mild fifteen, and then at one another. Some sense of what Dodds had just said appeared to spread among them—the psychology of it. This night's events would not be pleasant things to have eternally cast up to them—which they knew would happen if they attempted to cling to the old Husky fraternity.

"Ain't I right?" repeated Dodds. "The Huskies are dead! Ain't that so?"

"By thunder—yes!" broke out a sudden voice near the door—a voice suspiciously like the voice of the anxious gentleman who but a short time before had advised that Reilly be grabbed. "He's said it. The Huskies are dead, boys!"

The initiative was all that was needed. A concordant chorus rose from the Mossbeck men.

Dodds stooped over the fallen yardmaster, whom the loud talk seemed to have partly aroused. The engineer shook him by the shoulder, pulled him to a sitting position.

"The Huskies are dead, Mossy!" said Dodds. "Blowed higher'n a kite! Knocked cold as a frozen halibut."

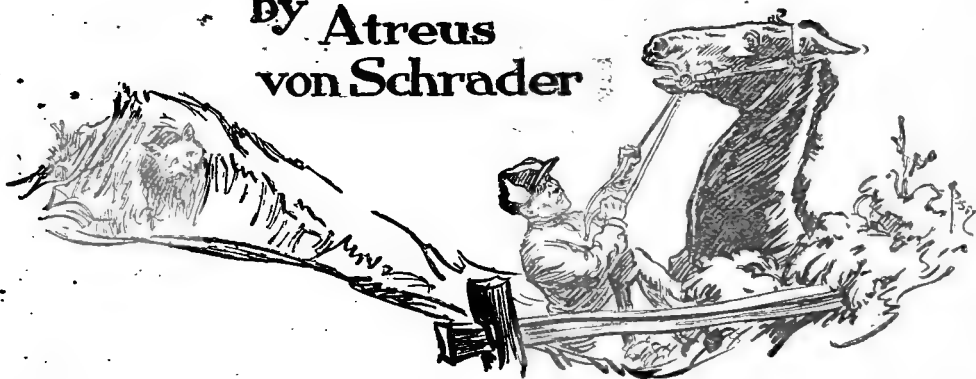
Mossbeck rubbed his swollen eyes with fumbling fists. From under puffed-up lids he managed to glance up, bewildered. His glance chanced to fall on Joe Reilly. Instinctively he raised his arm as if to ward off a blow.

"Knocked cold!" muttered Mossbeck through thick lips. "Knocked cold! Yes—I guess that's right!"



Foxed

by Atreus
von Schrader



"GOIN' smooth as oil," said Mike McCarthy to himself, sitting easily in the saddle of the bay mare that cantered along the road with a sweeping elastic stride.

They were out in the country, some miles from the Fairview track, and Mike was exercising a new purchase made by himself and his partner, "Sunny Jim" Dollom.

"Goin' smooth as oil. Gosh! Smell that fox," said Mike, as a strong fox-scent came to his nose from the brush at the roadside.

In one-half of one second the peaceful scene changed. The mare caught the smell, leaped madly, swerved, bolted, was pulled up, and before Mike could lean forward to restore her balance she reared and toppled over. Mike just did manage to slide from under. As she came down with a thud he slipped and fell on his face, one of her flying hoofs cutting a deep gash in his right hand.

The jockey and the mare struggled to their feet at the same time, Mike still hanging on to his reins. His girths had ripped at the buckles and the saddle hung disconsolately under the mare's belly. Both were covered with dust, and Mike's hand hurt him.

"Well, of all the fools on four legs—" he began, looking over his trembling mount for possible cuts and bruises.

Then he heard a sudden patter of hoofs on the soft road and another rider drew up beside him. It was one Campbell, stable-jockey for Senator Clymer, and an old enemy.

"Lookin' sorta mussed up," began Clymer unpleasantly. "She throw you?"

"Nope. She threw a fit an' I threw her," answered Mike abruptly.

"What happened, sure enough?" Campbell was curious.

"If you want t' know, she got the smell of a fox up her nose an' went crazy. He must 'a' been lying back there in the brush," explained Mike, who meant to ask Campbell for a leg-up, knowing he could not mount the fretting mare without help.

Campbell laughed in his saddle.

"Ridin's right good fun. You ought t' learn how," he said, and put his mount into a canter without another word. He knew Mike's predicament perfectly.

"Well, I'll be —," said Mike looking after him.

THE morning sun outlined in sharp silhouette a much bedraggled little figure limping painfully up the road and leading a nervous bay mare, under whose belly hung a saddle. Sunny Jim Dollom saw them as they came through the track gate. He jumped and looked again.

"Great gosh!" he remarked and set off at a run to meet his partner, for the bedraggled little figure leading the nervous mare was Mike.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

Mike looked at him and jerked a contemptuous thumb over his shoulder at the mare.

"'Nother fool horse," he answered.

"Well, what's the rest? Looks like you'd been in a mess," said Sunny Jim, as he took in the details of the wreck.

Mike said nothing until they had reached the line of stalls in Irish Row and he had turned the mare over to their colored stable-boy to be rubbed down. Then, turning to Sunny Jim, he said one word, "Fox," and began brushing himself off.

"Sorry I'm not a mind-reader," observed Sunny Jim, nettled.

A slow grin spread itself over Mike's dusty face.

"All right," he said, "I'll sing it to you. I had the mare down the road near Clymer's place. Canterin' along smooth's a snake, an' I'm just beginnin' t' think maybe we got somethin' when we bought her. I guess some old he-fox was lyin' in the brush waitin' f'r a rabbit.

"Anyhow, the mare gets his smell same as I do, an' she tries t' turn herself inside out. One whiff, an' she was off like the devil was after her, an' when I pulled her in what does she do but rear an' fall on her back. That fox's stink got her goat bad. I fell off mostly on my face, from the way it feels. I've seen 'em scared of the smell before, but never like this lady. She was scared clean t' death."

He paused, and the smile left his face.

"The mean part of it was that Campbell comes joggin' along on one of Clymer's skates an' sees us all shot t' pieces, an' after I tell him what happened the big skunk has a laugh an' goes on up the road, him knowin' I'd have t' hoof it back. The mare wouldn't stand f'r beans, an' with the busted girths I couldn't get on her without a stump or somethin'. Campbell's got his all wrapped up an' comin' to him," he added viciously. Then: "Glory! How that fox did stir up the mare!"

And he forthwith took his five feet and one inch to the pump to wash off the stains of battle.

That same evening Campbell told, with some embellishment, the story of Mike's fall to Lloyd, the trainer of Senator Clymer's large string at the Fairview track.

"An' Mike McCarthy's no slouch on a horse. The mare must a' hit the high spots t' spill him like that," he said. "An' if she'd busted his neck I could go right on livin'."

Lloyd, unpopularly known as "Sell-you-Lloyd" because of his ethics in the matter of racing and handling horses, smiled as Campbell finished. Lloyd himself was not unlike a fox in appearance.

"I c'd do without him an' Dollom too," he said, and the smile vanished. "I wonder if there's the makin' of a hunch in that," he went on, half to himself. "I'd give somethin' t' put one over on that pair. Might be worth thinkin' about, anyhow.

"Just f'r fun," he said to Campbell, "the next time you go down the road, stop in at the senator's place an' ask if they've got a fox. The farm-hands trap 'em once in a while an' sell 'em to the Hunt Club."

Campbell looked surprised.

"I don't get you," he said, "but I c'n guess what you're drivin' at. An' if that mare get's a smell of a fox after today, she'll turn a somersault sure's you're born. An' if it happened in a race, good night!"



THE bay mare Gloriol, by Glorifier out of Oriole, had speed and to spare, as Mike and Sunny Jim discovered the first time they put her to the test on the Fairview track, early one morning.

"She's greased lightnin'," said Mike enthusiastically, as he slid out of the saddle and Sunny Jim told him that they had covered the six furlongs, three-fourths of a mile, in one minute and twelve seconds.

Gloriol was not even breathing heavily as Mike threw a blanket over her sleek back and led her to the stalls.

"She's about ripe," admitted Sunny Jim. "Now we've got t' find a race she'll fit in."

"She owes me somethin' f'r bustin' me up the other day, an' I believe she'll come near payin' it by cashin' a little ticket. It's lucky there ain't any foxes around the track. I mean the four-legged kind, with a smell. There's plenty on two legs, like Sell-you-Lloyd."

A sudden thought struck him.

"Wonder if Campbell told him about me an' the mare an' the fox?"

"What of it?" said Sunny Jim. "He couldn't carry a fox in his pants an' sling him at you."

"I don't guess he could. But Lloyd's a cagey cuss, an' he's achin' for a chance to do us dirt. That man don't like us much. I'm sorry I told Campbell, though," said Mike, not knowing that he spoke words of wisdom.



IT WAS three or four days later that they found what they wanted, a six-furlong selling-race for maidens, *i. e.*, horses that had never won. And it was on his return from the secretary's office under the big grandstand, where he had gone to make Gloriot's entry, that Sunny Jim came face to face with Sell-you-Lloyd, apparently bound for the same place.

Lloyd was very friendly with the track officials, and his employer was a State senator. The two men nodded without speaking, and as they passed, Sunny Jim caught a faint but unmistakable taint of a fox—so faint that for a second it made no impression on his mind. Then, when he realized what it was, and that it had come from Sell-you-Lloyd, he mentally gasped and stopped in his tracks.

"What in the world? Or is it me that's gone crazy?" he asked himself. "If that wasn't the smell of a fox, I'll eat one. By the Great Horn Spoon——"

And his bewilderment trailed off into silence as he walked back to Irish Row.

There he found Mike burnishing a stirrup-iron, and told him his story. Mike looked at his partner keenly.

"Sure it wasn't skunk?" he asked. "That'd suit Lloyd better."

"Sure as shootin'. A fox ain't a Spring flower. This was fox, an' it was Lloyd. It's got me goin' four ways at once," said Sunny Jim, still almost incredulous of his own senses.

"Hm," said Mike, and pondered in silence. Then he suddenly called: "Snowball! You, Snowball!"

The colored stable-boy who was valet to their small string of horses came out of a stall.

"Yassah, Boss. You-all call me?" he asked.

"Yep. Shut that door an' come here," said Mike.

When Snowball shuffled up to the partners, Mike looked at him keenly.

"Smoke, c'n you keep a secret under your hat?" he asked.

"Yassah! I c'n hear the last trumpet an' go on sleepin'."

"That'll do. An' what I'm tellin' you's liable t' mean somethin' big. D' you know anybody over at Clymer's barns?"

"Yassah. I got a buddy works over theah. Name's Gawge Washin'ton Ran-

dolph. He cleans harness fo' Misto Lloyd," answered Snowball.

"That's good. Here's what I want you t' do," said Mike. "You ease over there an' see this George Washin'ton friend of yours and see if you c'n find out if they've got a fox around the stable, see?"

"Yassah, I gits you," said Snowball, his eyes rolling.

"An' I don't want 'em t' know you're tryin' t' find out anythin'. You work soft an' quiet an' you get somethin' nice," said Mike.

"Boss, you c'n buy it now," said Snowball confidently. "I reckon I'd best finish my beddin'-down, an' then I'll mosey along." He hesitated. "Could one o' you gem'men let me have a little change? Those wo'thless no-'count niggers over that-away mos' gen'ally has a crap-game in the evenin', an' the bones makes a lot o' talkin' an' I c'n get frien'ly quick."

"Guess we c'n stake you," answered Mike to this appeal, and tossed him half a dollar.

"Thank you, sah. I'm on my way," said Snowball and shuffled back to his work.

"Think you c'n trust him?" asked Sunny Jim, when he was out of earshot.

"Sure. Tell a coon he's in on somethin' big an' he'll snoop around like a cat huntin' a mouse." Mike paused. "If they've got a fox over there, it means somethin', an' we've got t' know it. Foxes ain't pets. An' I can't see you an' me paradin' over to Lloyd's barn an' askin' him. I'll take a chance on Snowball."



NEXT morning Snowball proudly reported the results of his secret diplomacy to the partners.

"Mawnin', gem'men. I done catch yo' fox," he began. "Fust I hunt up my frien' Gawge. He was a-tryin' t' make a pass on a double fo'."

"You great big Shoutin' Liz,' he yells, an' the dice is good to that boy. That's whar I come in. I sez t' him—

"Gawge, you got yo' chicken, now you take yo' winnin' an' yo' run like a fox,' I sez.

"Huh. We got somethin' in a box down in the harness-room c'n do all the runnin' needed. I'm shootin' the piece,' sez Gawge."

Here Snowball showed all his teeth in a wide grin.

"Gem'men, I fades him fo' the fo' bits, an' Gawge he drops a measly three an' goes bust." Snowball slapped his knee in his triumph. "I fades him, an' I gits his money, an' I gits the knowledge you-all wants, all in one minute. How's dat?"

"Good work," said Mike approvingly, and turned to Sunny Jim. "Looks like it's up to us," he said seriously. "Wish I knew what Lloyd's got up his sleeve besides his arm."

"Me too. Let's see how it looks. Campbell tells Lloyd the mare's scared t' death of the smell of a fox. Then Lloyd goes an' gets him a fox. But what's he goin' t' do with it? He can't put it in Campbell's pocket, an' even if he slept with it Campbell couldn't get enough of the stink t' worry anythin' in a race. An' he couldn't turn it loose on the track or he'd bust up the whole race an' maybe throw a horse. What's the answer?"

Sunny Jim was puzzled and worried. It was obviously more than a coincidence that the fox had been brought to the Clymer stables immediately after the bay mare's exhibition of terror, and it was the merest accident that they had been put on their guard.

"Guess we've got some studyin' t' do," said Mike. "An' I ain't got time now. The mare's got t' go out. Anyhow, the race don't come f'r four days, an' that'll give us time t' turn around in. S'long."

The little jockey went to the saddle-room for the mare's gear. When she was saddled, Sunny Jim gave him a leg-up, and Mike and the mare went off down the road.

That evening they puzzled over the problem of the fox some more. Each theory seemed less probable than the one before.

"Maybe Lloyd thinks he's scarin' us out of a race," suggested Sunny Jim at last.

"Then why would he keep his — fox so secret. He'd let us know he had it," answered Mike, with perfect logic. "C'mon, let's go t' bed. I got a headache thinkin' about it."

It was perhaps two o'clock the next morning that Sunny Jim, sound asleep, waked abruptly to find Mike beating him wildly on the ribs.

"I got it! S'help me Sam, I got it!" he whispered hysterically.

"Got what? What're you lammin' me for?" asked Sunny Jim, still half asleep.

"Got the fox. What d' you think? The pip?" answered Mike gleefully.

For the next five minutes the little room buzzed with his excited whispering.

"Am I right or am I wrong? What else could it be? Guess we hit the nail on the head, all right, all right! An' how's my little answer?" he finished triumphantly.

"Mike, sure as thunder you've out-guessed 'em," Sunny Jim, now thoroughly awake, answered slowly. "My hat's off. I didn't know you had so much brains."

"Looks like they work better when I'm asleep," admitted Mike modestly. "But the point is, we got a line on Lloyd an' his fox. Now I'm goin' back t' bed an' sleep some more. I c'n use some more sleep." And he yawned aloud.

"You've got it owin' you. Good night."



MIKE and Sunny Jim were at the stalls in Irish Row almost as soon as the sun was up. Snowball was busy with the horses, and they were going over the day's card.

"One thing's dead pop sure," said Mike suddenly. "As soon as they post the odds on the mare, we'll know whether Lloyd's passed anythin' to the bookies. The way they work together at this track they ought t' be harnessed double. An' if he thinks he c'n put one over on us, he'll let the happy news seep out. The track knows the mare c'n run."

"Sounds like a safe guess," answered Sunny Jim. "We've only got four more days till the race. Think that's enough?"

"You bet!" answered Mike confidently. "But I guess I'll be trottin' along. Snowball," he called, "bring out the mare, an' get that heavy bridle." He turned to his partner. "Guess I c'n borrow a halter out there, too."

Five minutes later he was mounted on Gloriot and rode out of the track gate. This time he turned to the right instead of to the left. The Green Tree Hunt Club was some three miles away on the right-hand road.

When the little figure on the bright bay mare had disappeared, Sunny Jim sat down on an upturned bucket and pondered deeply. Then he took from his pocket a slender roll of bills, the partners' entire wealth, and fingered them absent-mindedly.

Mike did not return until the middle of the afternoon. Gloriot appeared to have

been sweating freely and Sunny Jim looked at Mike inquiringly.

"Been lettin' her out?" he asked.

"Nope. She got all het up an' excited out there." He nodded toward the road he had taken that morning and grinned. "She didn't have a good time at first. Not f'r a cent. But she settled down after a while, an' the first thing you know she'll be quiet as a cow."

"Glad t' hear that," said Sunny Jim, as he walked around the mare and looked her over.

He noted that one of the cheek-straps of the heavy bridle had been broken and was buckled in the next hole up.

"She must 'a' raised a rumpus!"

"She did. All of that, an' then some. — near pulled her head off," said Mike, patting Gloriol's shoulder.



THE day before the race Snowball greeted the partners with even more than his usual affability.

"Mawnin', gem'men, mawnin'. I got some mo' news fo' you-all," he announced.

"All right, let's have it," said Mike.

"Las' night I was walkin' up to the big barn—" he pointed in the direction of the long lines of white-painted stalls at the opposite end of the track where Senator Clymer and other large owners held sway—"an' I finds my buddy Gawge a-goin' the same way, lookin' fo' the crap-game they mos' gin'ally has up there evenin's. I sez to him—

— "Gawge, how's that fox?" An' Gawge he jumps.

"Man," he says, 'Misto Campbell give me fits t'other evenin' about dat. He hears I said fox, an' he busts loose all over me. That fox was a secret, he says.' Gawge, he don't like Misto Campbell. 'Don't matter now, I reckon,' he says, ' 'cause Misto Lloyd he done took an' killed misto fox yesterday.' "

Here Snowball paused and looked at his employers hopefully.

"Gem'men, I asks you, is that info'mation wuth maybe fo' bits? Gawge, he done cotch six passes wif' the bones, an' he cleaned me right."

"It is," answered Sunny Jim without hesitation, while Mike capered for glee.

"Guess that adds up like two an' two is four," he said, "maybe we haven't got 'em now, an' they don't know it!"

On each of the following mornings Mike and the mare Gloriol disappeared up the right-hand road, returning in midafternoon. On the third day he climbed down and announced that he was satisfied.

"She's right. She's fixed. An' tomorrow she'll be throwin' dust in their faces all the way around." Here he paused. "If the odds are piled up the way we think they'll be, we c'n pick up some loose change besides the purse. An' we c'n use it," he added.

Advance odds are not often posted on overnight selling-races, so Mike and Sunny Jim had perforce to wait. The six-furlong dash was the fourth race on the day's card, and Snowball led the blanketed mare to the paddock a full hour before the start was scheduled, the partners following behind.

"Just as well t' have her where we c'n keep an eye on her," said Mike. "I wouldn't trust Lloyd through a glass door, an' if he's layin' f'r us, he's liable t' try anythin', if he gets the chance. I want time t' snoop around before we go to the post."

Entered in the fourth race were Gloriol, a brown filly called Perfection from Senator Clymer's string, James Dunham's High-roller, and a pair, coupled in the betting, from the Albemarle stables, which last were owned by one Sol Greenburg, a book-maker.

It does not look well for a man to race horses and make a book simultaneously, hence the use of the stable name. Sol Greenburg, incidentally, was a close friend of Sell-you-Lloyd, and Mike cursed under his breath when he saw the entry.

"It's right — raw when a man c'n stick a horse in a race an' then sit back an' lay odds on him," he said, "an' this looks like a frame-up, if we've got three horses in the race aimin' at us."

Sunny Jim nodded without speaking.

"Did you stop t' think that we didn't know Lloyd was puttin' anythin' in this race until two days ago, an' that maybe we're barkin' up a stump?" he asked, after a moment.

"The minute you got the smell of the fox on Lloyd, I'd 'a' bet the last dollar in the sock that he'd have a horse in the first race we gave the mare. Him trainin' f'r Clymer, an' Clymer bein' a big politician, Lloyd gets the information he wants right

from the bat. That same mornin', when you met him, the secretary told him the mare was entered, or I'm a bad guesser. He was waitin' for it, an' now he's got it. Don't you fret about not havin' anythin' t' fret about!"

And Mike wandered off into the crowd, while Sunny Jim stayed near the mare.

Half an hour later he came back.

"Couldn't find out nothin'," he said, "but it's on the track we'll bump into it. Guess I'll go put on my ridin'-rags. We ought t' start in half an hour, an' that'll give you time t' look over the books an' pick a soft spot."

 THE jockey-room was a small frame building next to the grandstand, and when Mike entered it was filled with riders in various states of dress and undress, getting ready to ride, or getting through. The first one he saw was Campbell, gorgeous in the colors of the Clymer stable. Unnoticed, Mike drew up close beside him.

"Campbell," he said, loud enough for the rest to hear. The chatter stopped and the room listened as he continued, "I got a hunch about you."

Campbell, half a head taller, sneered—"Well, what of it?"

"I'm wonderin' myself," answered Mike, two red spots on his cheekbones, his voice full of anger controlled. "I want t' tell you somethin'. It's this: I'm on to your curves. I'm watchin' you. You think you're foxy—" Campbell turned color at the word—"but you put this in your pipe an' smoke it; the fox that steals the chickens gets the buckshot." And Mike went ahead with his dressing.

Campbell did not seem to find a suitable retort.

Mike rejoined Sunny Jim a few minutes later.

"I put a bee in Campbell's belfry, all right, all right," he said. "I told him he wasn't so — foxy as he thought, an' he got all fussed up. Guess maybe you'd better go an' put down a little bet," he went on. "We'll be startin' in a few minutes."

Sunny Jim hesitated.

"We're runnin' pretty close," he said. "Think we'd better take a chance?"

"We're not takin' a chance," answered Mike promptly. "We've got a good thing,

an' we'd be goats if we didn't hop to it. The mare's got the legs of the field if her trial showed anythin', an' we've got Campbell fixed, an' if I can't put it over those boys ridin' f'r Greenburg, I want t' starve. D' you want t' wait till somebody brings you money?"

"All right. That's enough," said Sunny Jim. "Here I go," and departed for the betting-ring on the word.

Except for an inaudible conference between Sell-you-Lloyd and Campbell in the paddock, Mike's watchful eyes saw nothing out of the way, and this in itself was not suspicious, though trainers do not as a rule give their jockeys riding-orders at the last moment.

Snowball had slipped the blanket from Gloriol's back and Mike was ready to mount when Sunny Jim returned, this time with a grin.

"Say it quick," counselled Mike. "We're liable t' leave."

"We're on the mare f'r fifty plunks at eighteen to one, t' win," said Sunny Jim, "an' Sol Greenburg wrote the ticket. I'd like t' burn that thief. I told him we'd make his entries look like hay-tedders, an' he got sore. Eighteen to one looks fishy," he continued, "when they all know the mare c'n run. Wonder if Greenburg's in with Lloyd?"

"I don't know, an' I don't give a —," said Mike. "We c'n handle the flock. Hand me my bat. Here we go," as the bugle called them to the post.

Sunny Jim passed up a heavy cutting-whip that, contrary to his practise, Mike had brought with him from Irish Row. This he slid under his left leg, where he could get at it quickly.



DUNHAM'S Highroller led the procession past the stands. After her came Senator Clymer's Perfection, which handsome filly was received with loud applause by the crowd. She was the favorite in the betting, at seven to three. Mike came third, and rode by almost in silence, for the outsider is rarely popular with the spectators. After him came the two Greenburg entries, their jockeys in earnest conversation as they rode to the starting point, up around the first turn, almost opposite Irish Row.

Mike, watching everything in sight, noticed that Campbell's loose silk jacket

seemed to bulge around the waist. The five horses, maidens all, lined up with much fretting and fidgeting. Green horses are a nuisance to any starter, and the moment they had reached a semblance of a line, the flag fell and they were off to a ragged break.

Perfection, on her toes, leaped into the lead, with Gloriol at her girths and the rest half a jump behind. Into the backstretch they raced, each filly doing all she knew, with the price of horseshoes thrown in, for there is no time in a six-furlong sprint for anything but speed. Mike, rating Gloriol along, saw that she was holding the pace without distress.

The minute and a little more that it takes to cover three-fourths of a mile can seem a lifetime to a jockey. Mike had confidence in the mare's speed. But he did not know, beyond a spectacular guess, what might come from Campbell, except that something was on the cards and that he had to meet it.

Down the backstretch they fled, not five feet between the noses of the leader and the last, Greenburg's Nipsin. Mike's face was white and grim as he lay out along the bay mare's neck with every sense alert. Not for a second did he take his eyes from Campbell, just ahead and on the rail. The worst possible position for Mike, for what Campbell might do would be shielded from the rest by Gloriol, and Mike could not afford to drop back or try for the outside.

Like trout in a stream the five horses swirled into the last turn, each jockey crouched and ready to ride it out to the wire. Highroller had crept up inch by inch, and was galloping on almost even terms with Gloriol, while Perfection held her lead of half a length.

As they straightened out into the stretch, Mike saw Campbell glance at him over his shoulder and then, almost in a stride, swing his mount away from the rail and toward him, as if to cut him off. At the same moment he saw Campbell reach swiftly into the front of his jacket and bring out something that hung limp and heavy in his grip. It was a dusky bay, almost Gloriol's color.

"By gosh, I guessed right," exclaimed Mike, and could have shouted in his relief, while a mad shiver ran up and down his spine.

Gloriol, her dainty head thrust out, her ears laid back close, was holding her own nobly. Mike turned white as death under

his deep tan as he saw Campbell shift the raw fox's skin to his knee and grip it firmly. This was the test. Would the mare stand it? Campbell leaned toward him and he caught the overpowering stink of it as it swept past the mare's head.

He heard himself yell a curse at the other jockey. A stride lost here might mean the race, and Gloriol needed all his attention. Twice past her face Campbell swung the skin. She caught the full stench of the dreaded odor. She did not swerve an inch. She did not so much as falter in her stride, and Mike saw Campbell's look of triumph turn to amazement and fury.

They were well into the stretch, the two horses holding the same relative positions. Campbell suddenly rose in his stirrups and made as though to throw the fox's skin at Gloriol's head, not four feet from him—and Mike knew what chance a protest of a foul would have with the judges when Senator Clymer's stable was involved.

As though it were a sword, he drew the heavy cutting-whip from its place under his left leg and, as Campbell's arm raised, he lashed out wickedly, full at his face. Campbell flinched in the saddle and dropped the skin to the dust of the track as Mike cut at him again.

"Look out f'r the buckshot, you fox," he yelled. "Now, let's make a race of it!"

But Perfection was done. For two strides Campbell had forgotten the mare under him, and her swift flight had become a squandering, wasteful run. Before he could gather her together, he found himself a length behind Mike, with Highroller creeping up. A hundred yards from the wire Highroller was on even terms with the bay mare. Mike could hear the rest of the field pounding along behind him, but dared not risk a glance over his shoulder. He had outguessed and outridden Campbell. It was up to the mare.

"You little fool," he begged, "let's go home. Sunny Jim's waitin' f'r us, an' he needs us bad. Lady horse, jump to it!"

His cutting-whip followed the fox's skin to the ground. He had no further use for it. Any thoroughbred will do her best in the finish of a race.

Fifty yards from the wire he was still neck and neck with Highroller, and the brown head of Greenburg's Nipsin appeared in the corner of his right eye. Nipsin was coming at a terrific pace.

"Little sweetheart, we got t' make it," pleaded Mike, riding with his heart and his soul in his finger-tips.

The bay mare seemed to hear his plea, for between strides, in the minute fraction of a second, she stiffened to her task.

"C'mon you red devil, show 'em," he prayed, and like a skilfully handled yacht in a crowded roadway Gloriol rocketed out of the ruck. Close to the ground she ran, her stride swift and true and long. Inch by heart-breaking inch she drew away from Highroller. For an eternity she was held even by Nipsin, the Greenburg entry, whose jockey had gone to his whip, and then Mike, Mike and Gloriol, the mare that went mad at the smell of a fox, fled under the wire a length in the lead. This time the crowded stands roared a welcome to the outsider.



SUNNY JIM had found a place on the rail when the race started, and with a pair of glasses followed Mike. He saw Campbell's desperate attempt to throw the mare out of her stride; saw Mike cut him across the face and set sail for home.

"Mike—" he muttered and held the words unfinished through that aching last eighth of a mile. "Whew! But he had it right to a T!" he said, with a gasp of relief, when it was over, and bored through the crowd to where Sell-you-Lloyd and Greenburg were talking excitedly together.

"Didn't go much, did it?" he asked, and the two men whirled in their tracks. Sunny Jim's voice was unsteady with sheer triumph. "Right cute trick, an' hard f'r the judges t' see. But Mike's cuter. Maybe you'd like t' know that he's had the mare out at the Green Tree Club f'r the last few days, tied up short to a whole cage full of foxes. She c'n sleep with a fox f'r a pillow."

His two hearers glanced at each other and neither took comfort from the sight. Sunny Jim went on, to Lloyd:

"Th' day I bumped into you in the paddock I got a nose full o' fox—that put us wise, an' this race is the answer. You — crook, got anythin' t' say about it?" he asked.

Lloyd had not, and Sunny Jim turned on his heel and went to meet his partner.

THE DESPOTIC MISSOURI RIVER PILOT

BY E. A. BRININSTOOL

THE Missouri River pilot of the old days was a kind of autocrat and despot—a sort of person who was in a class by himself and could command fabulous sums for his services. A thousand dollars a month was not infrequently charged by these men, and as the boats simply could not dispense with their services, and also because their number—the really first-class pilots—was by no means legion, they "ruled the river" with a rod of iron.

Among these pilots was one Joe Oldham, noted for his skill, his independence and his extravagance. He wore the finest solid gold watch on the river, as well as numerous diamonds, and he was haughty and overbearing.

On one occasion Capt. Rider of the steamer *Post Boy*, wanted Oldham to pilot his boat from St. Louis to Leavenworth and return. Oldham came to the boat at the captain's solicitation. He was bedecked with diamonds, wore a silk "tile,"

patent-leather shoes and carried a gold-headed silk umbrella.

"What's your charge to take my boat to Leavenworth and back, Mr. Oldham?" inquired Capt. Rider.

"Fifteen hundred dollars," replied the pilot with a yawn.

"What!" shouted the captain. "Why, man, that's more than the boat will make for the trip."

But Oldham remained impassive.

"Well, well, Captain," he finally exclaimed, "you better talk fast, for I can't afford to stand here in the sun for no fifteen hundred dollars."

It was pay or no pilot, and the captain ground his teeth, but finally ordered Oldham aboard, saying he was ready to start at once.

"Not quite yet, Cap," coolly replied Oldham. "You just order a carriage to take me to my hotel for my baggage!"

Later in life Oldham died in poverty in a squalid hut near the river bank at Yankton, South Dakota.



The Devil's Own

by Gordon Young

Author of "Murder!", "Gaboreau the Terrible," etc.

MIDNIGHT and a gale, with the sea black and boiling. Such a night it was as the devil loves, for it brings him souls of sailor men. The *Trenton* went before a typhoon and floundered in the Coral Sea. The stays snapped and the bare poles toppled, wrenching open a leak that flooded out the carpenter and made the pumps useless. The passengers and all hands took to open water in overloaded boats and whatever else the fingers could hold to. The good ship pitched and swayed heavily, sinking lower and lower into the water.

Then the devil felt cheated, for "Chuck" Flynn hugged the raft and would not be shaken off.

By his side, an arm encircling and pinning her to the hatch cover which was lashed on two sides to heavy yards, lay an unconscious girl.

He did not know who she was. In the glare of lightning he had hauled her from a piece of wreckage that drove against the raft. She had made a gulping, half-choked cry for help, then was silent. Chuck as readily would have reached out for a coolie. The raft was safe. It would ride a sea that had sucked down the sturdy four-master.

A bad night indeed for ships it was, whether they were pounding with steam or steering behind stripped masts.

The thunders rolled and crashed across

the heavens as though God Himself were hurling mountain-tops at the roof of the sky and watching them roll down and drop from the ends of the world. Lightning flared from zenith to horizon—fiercely brilliant zig-zags where for countable seconds the dome of night was cracked, shattered, and would surely have fallen if the split and crazed sky had not been again calked with darkness. The waves ragefully toppled on to and stamped down the raft that would not stay under, but pitched and swirled, and lifted itself as a toothpick in a wash-tub, tempestuously beset by a boy splashing with his hands.

Chuck was unterrified. Very nearly unimpressed. It was merely another fight for life. He had been in many of one kind and another.

The smothering waves rolled over, choking his breath back. The salt got into his nose and throat, strangling him. It seemed that something more than the impersonal thud and tug of shapeless watery hands was beating his body and flinging the raft now half-way to the sky, now pulling it down, down, down till the bed of the ocean must have been within an arm's reach.

But he hung on. If death had come it would have found his fingers clamped unyieldingly to the rope reeved through holes bored in the hatch cover and bent to the unsinkable spars. Yet, tormented by

smothering water and strangling salt, he was fiercely wishful to let go and drive his brawny knuckles into something. He was in that mood which causes a quick-tempered man to kick a coil over which he has stumbled, or to smite with wrathful fist the sail that flaps in his face at reefing.

By and by the storm grew short of breath. The wind drew off. Yet the raft swung up and down from crest to trough, but was ever borne forward by the tidal roll of waves that fled through the night as though to be far away when the sun with eager eyes came out of the east and missed the good ship *Trenton*.

With the wind dead, Chuck could move about with somewhat less chance of being taken overboard. He had sea legs that could hold the deck with his ship on beams' end, but he did not now dare to take a full step. He could not see half-way to the tip of his nose, but feeling carefully he bent astride of the limp body and braced his toes in the loops of rope.

He lifted the girl, face down, at the waist to get the water out of her lungs, then rolling her over, worked her arms forward and back to give her chest the respiratory movement.

Gambling, fighting, or aloft in wet rigging with a cold wind in his face, Chuck was one of those who stay till all is done that can be done. And though again and again he bent his ear to her mouth he could not detect the faintest rattle of breath or moisture against his face. But he worked on.

Even as he worked he wondered, wondered if the girl were not dead and lucky. There was no water, no drinkable water; and not so much as the dust of a cracker on the raft—and it was God knew how many miles from land. In a few hours the sun would come up hot and angry; and in a day, or two at most, would set the brain spinning dizzily, and by a week would have the flesh shriveled to the bones.

On maps made for those who travel from the book-shelves to an arm-chair, the ocean is spotted with islands. Draw a line in any direction and it will traverse two or three and clip points from others every six inches. But the South Seas are seas of immense distances. Undoubtedly the wind and racing swells had carried the raft

far from the steamer channels; and except for a stray blackbird or pearler, outside those channels the Coral Sea was as unfrequented, as undisturbed, as when the first Phœnician came to the Gates of Gibraltar and fearfully peered beyond.

The hoarse roar of breakers pounding in the lessening distance warned Chuck of what was coming. He settled flat and thrust his arms to the elbows under the ropes, then held in place with one hand the shirt he had ripped from his body and twisted about the face and head of the girl to check the water from filling her throat as she lay unconscious. The raft was making for the breakers: it was at one of those islands that may or may not be on the map.

Then came a harsh grinding as though long rows of teeth were gnawing at the bottom of the raft. A sudden rise on a wave's breast and—*chug, cra-a-a-sh, smash, urgh*. Right up against the rock they went—and stopped.

He felt the raft sink down and back. Then caught by the next wave it smashed forward again. It sank down and back and smashed forward again and again; caught in the tidal rhythm it lurched up and down and forward and back against the sharp, myriad-edged coral. Less than an hour of such pounding and there would be left splinters—nothing more.

Chuck spoke into the night. What he said was blasphemy shot through with the lurid oaths of a sailorman. No fear in it. No shrinking from the chill of death: just a plain, hard man's word, calling upon Christ to damn the waves and the rocks and the black night. And who shall say that the Angel of the Records did not hear and write it down as a prayer?

Anyway, when the waves run angrily at the shore, for some reason or other that scientific men know of but I do not, every few minutes with rhythmic precision there comes sweeping in a mighty breaker, mightier than those before or after, often mountainously high. Such a one caught the raft, hurled it forward, at the same time lifting it up—up—up, then dropped it smashingly, and the sharp coral point, tipped with a million infinitesimal claws, came right through the hatch cover and held fast. Chuck's hand gripped that point of coral as he snatched out blindly for something to steady himself. The raft

settled at an angle on the rock's side, and he felt near to slipping off every second.

There he hung with minutes making hours of themselves, one hand strained at the coral tip and the other cramped to numbness with clenching the girl at his side. And every few minutes the hugest of breakers would roaringly rush at them, splash them, wash them, tug and wrench at them. But Chuck hung on. When the waves soothed down a little and came less near, he fumblingly found a perch on the rocks and dragged the girl with him.

Some time before dawn she stirred in his arms. Chuck ceased growling curses and began to chafe her hands and face, her legs and arms, talking to her and warming her sluggish blood.

With dawn he found low tide and a mile of coral boulders, great brilliant colored boulders, sponge-like rocks they were, and sharp as the broken edge of glass and hard as the fluting of a file, between them and the beach. He wore no shoes, but he walked and scrambled and carried her.

II

X IT WAS when Chuck laid her on the sand for the sun to warm that he saw just how young she was; and found too that there was something in her face of the strange beauty that he had seen among women that never came within speaking distance of him: the women that always had well-dressed and low-voiced men about them—the rich, the upper class, the swells.

She was scarcely more than a child, he thought, judging by her slenderness; and like a child at dreams she lay unconscious, the pallor of a death-like sleep on her face. The thin, wet skirt held fast to the body's outline: a body frail and slight as a stalk of spear grass barely swaying in the breeze, even as her breast faintly moved with breath.

Chuck, thick-chested and wide-shouldered, hard-faced, built like the trunk of an oak, big-boned and lumped with muscle, stood above her. And when he had stared at her for a long time, he raised his eyes and looked out over the sea. There was nothing but whitecaps endlessly running. The hoarseness of the distant surf was in his ears. He looked behind him, and with mingled satisfaction and apprehension noted

that the bush ran back and back until it climbed and covered with a thick green fuzz the lofty round-topped hills. The island being large assured food; but being large also gave reason to fear that somewhere amid the shadowed jungles were villages of wild men. Chuck had spent long years in these seas: he had met the savages on beach and on his own decks. Now not a thing he had in the way of a weapon but a knife, assured against being mislaid or lost by a cord tied from the ring of its handle to his belt.

For a long time he stood staring about him. A flock of cockatoos gossiped shrilly in a tall tree at the edge of the bush whereon they seemed to have found something to eat. Small black-and-white birds with long, twitching tails darted about seeking breakfast from insects under the bushes. An azure kingfisher came close overhead, winging seaward; and following with his eye Chuck saw it hover about in a sweeping circle, then—a mere speck in the distance—plunge down. And as it arose he caught the glisten of water and scales. He realized that it was time he, too, thought of something to eat.

Nature is generous on tropic isles; but lest man become too laggard she makes him hunt, dig and climb for his food. No Garden of Eden are these islands, not unless the plow and hoe have caressed the soft black soil.

Chuck had seen small hermit-crabs in unaccountable numbers down where the water edged its way through the coral-bulwarked shore; and hermit-crabs can be eaten if one must eat. In searching for them he came to a pool left by low tide, and after breathlessly splashing, tossed out a half-dozen fish, pitifully small, and scaled with vivid hues. A meager breakfast at best and one requiring fire.

He dug into a fallen, rotting tree, and many small pieces of dry wood to which the rain had not reached in the night's storm, were cut off. He found one long enough and tough enough to stand the friction needed to start a fire. It seemed hopeless: rubbing the point of one stick up and down the groove of another. But Chuck rubbed on, squatting over the grooved stick that was held firm by his feet as he had seen the natives do. But where the natives could bring a blaze in sixty seconds, he rubbed for half that

many minutes. He knew it was the only possible way to get fire, that is to say, for him to get fire.

And so he rubbed until a tiny wreath of smoke curled up from the wood dust; then with back aching by the strain of bending and arms weak from tense effort he flashed the pointed stick up and down the groove faster than ever to increase the heat. At the first winking of flame he laid a few shreds of touchwood, crouched forward, breathing softly, bellows-like, added splinters, and the fire was soon leaping high.

Too; water must be found. He knew that somewhere, twisting down from the hills, there were streams. One of the miracles of provident nature is the streams, inexhaustible, that flow to the sea from the hearts of such small islands. But where or how to look for them was something to be considered then: building a fire is thirsty work under a morning, tropic sun. Coconuts would do very well for water.

Chuck peered into the bush for the shaggy fronds of a coconut palm. Coconut palms are soon choked out in the bush. They must have the protecting touch of cultivation to do well. But in his search he found a lone straggler at a distance from him on the edge of the beach where the reef gaped wide and the water came up the hard sloping beach of white coral sand. The palm towered sixty feet, and the fruit hung high, except for such husks as lay on the ground in various stages of decay. Some of them were sprouted and rooted.

But Chuck was seldom denied anything that he wanted. He looked about, then cut a piece of rattan that wound its throttling length up the trunk of an ironwood, spliced its ends so as to encircle the palm bole, and having given himself the tree-climber's substitute for a bosun's chair, worked his way up from the ground to the leaky roof.

He cut away such of the fruit for eating as seemed ripest; then swore feelingly as he saw the green coconuts, those desirable for drinking, break like fallen eggs and spill the milk on the absorbent sand. Indeed, Nature does require compensation for her tropic largeness, and Chuck, with unutterable exasperation realized that he could secure no more coconuts than he was able

to bunch at the stems and carry down by hand; and this would be but three or four at most.

With a feeling of getting the best of the palm he cut away much of hardened fruit, not caring whether it broke in the fall or not, and knowing very well that it would not, for the two-inch husk was like a cushion. Then he climbed down with nuts for drinking.

Small crabs, scavengers at that, and tiny fish, brilliant as though they had slid from a rainbow and fleshless as wraiths, together with coconuts in all stages, some mere paste and some spongy with over-ripeness, and a few filled with a pint of cherished milk, was the breakfast he had prepared for her; and a better one, no castaway on that spot could have furnished for a queen though she saved her crown from the sinking ship and wore it to the table.

III



WHEN he went back to the beach where he had left the girl, she was lying, slightly raised, on her elbow. She did not get up. She lay motionless, but there was a curious alertness in her deep eyes. It was such an expression as might be in the eyes of a maid who, though ripe-breasted, had never seen a man before.

She had seen Chuck before, and had spoken with the captain about him. The captain, knowing who she was, had been attentive—extremely so. He had said to her that Chuck Flynn was the best seaman on the *Trenton*, a dangerous man, the devil's own, one of those fellows who would do anything. Chuck, according to the captain, had been a blackbirder, smuggler, Chink-runner, maybe a pirate. But a good seaman, the best of seamen.

"Well," said Chuck to her in a kind of encouraging, surprised tone, "how d'you feel? Pretty good?"

She was slow to answer. Her deep, dark eyes searched his face as though to read there what she dreaded to hear. As Chuck stood before her, looking at her tired young face about which the black hair fell in wet, straight lines, he felt that for some reason she was remote from him as no woman had ever been. She seemed to have with her there on that island something of the

remoteness that had characterized such as she in crowded ports.

In the long silence he grew conscious of his naked breast and folded his arms in a kind of awkward modesty. Her own thin waist was torn wide at the shoulder so that it slipped low on her arm; and her wet skirt, gaping at the belt, clung to the outline of her legs. She seemed not indifferent to her disarray so much as oblivious.

She asked slowly—

"The others?"

Chuck stretched his hand solemnly toward the ocean and looked silently out toward the racing whitecaps.

"Just you and I?" she whispered, sorrowfully incredulous.

He nodded. The solemnity of being a survivor had touched even his reckless soul.

"But the other boats?" she insisted.

"We 's on a raft. 'Lone."

"Raft?" she repeated, making an effort to remember.

He nodded again. Words were repressed within him. For one thing her voice was low and tremulously vibrant. His own was rough and hoarse from much shouting in high winds. For another, she was strange, unlike any woman before whom he had stood face to face.

"I left the ship in a boat—a life-boat—with others."

"You 's on a bit o' timber. Bumped agin the raft an' you stayed. We hit the rocks. Hung out there till mornin'."

He indicated the broad stretch of coral rocks.

She turned and looked silently out to where the breakers, like interminable phalanxes with white-plumed crests, pressed forward to the assault.

Presently Chuck said:

"I'm ready t' cook over there. We got a-eat."

"Yes. Yes, of course," she answered, uninterestedly.

"I'll pack you 'f you don't feel like walkin'?"

"I shall walk, thank you," she said, as a startled expression flashed across her eyes.

She arose stiffly. Her wet dress clung to her legs. She bent down to pull the skirt free, but at the next step it clung again; so she walked on, trying not to mind. She was sore and weak, also a bit dizzy. But she did not want help. She did not want him to touch her.

IV



DAYS and nights passed.

She was sad, weak and afraid. It seemed that she must awaken some morning and find that the *Trenton* was safely afloat, and that she was not alone on a remote island with a rough stranger whom she had surprised several times watching her in a way that made her tremble inwardly, and even made her hands shake a little when she remembered. She continued to feign the illness that she had at first felt, guessing that if weakness would not protect her nothing would.

Chuck could not take his eyes off her except when he was doing something for her comfort.

By slow journeys they had walked along the beach for some miles until they came to a stream by which a permanent camp was made. With almost incalculable labor he had cut and pulled down a sago palm for the leaves with which he had thatched a lean-to for her. In cutting the palm he had spliced rattan, and climbing aloft had made an end of his rattan line fast under the leaves; then with an ax made by putting a heavy clam-shell in a cleft stick, he had chopped and burned until the palm was cut enough for him to pull it down with the rattan—thereby saving much laborious chopping.

He did not know it was a sago palm, and wouldn't have known how to make the pulp edible anyway, so six months' food went to waste while he patiently ground a shell on coral and wet sand, turning it into the shape of a fish hook. Also he went into the bush looking for figs and bananas and bread-fruit. He brought in some yellow bread-fruit, but neither of them could eat it; and with all of his experiences in the tropics he never thought to bake it.

More coconuts could not be found, and the water from the stream, running over slimy roots, infested with frogs and creeping things, and appearing very unhealthy with its shallow depth revealing the black, slimy bottom, seemed dangerous to drink and was tantalizingly insipid. But Chuck dug a hole close to the edge of the stream, going down some three feet. This filled with seepage, so that they had filtered water.

In the evenings they sat close to the

smoking fire, as close as possible to discourage mosquitoes, and as Chuck filed away on his fish-hooks or spliced and twisted fibrous strings from palm leaves into a line, he fell into the habit of talking freely, and recounted his voyages, his fights, his adventures. There was nothing modest in his recitals. He was a primitive fellow and not ashamed of what he had done.

She listened with silent interest, sometimes more thrilled than she would have dared to let him know. He had sailed as a cabin-boy out of Cork on a Welsh collier and the mate had tried to kill him. He had been on a whaler and was knocked skyward out of a boat that a whale had caught in a flurry. He had been on a ship that overhauled a Chinese junk in the Yellow Sea and found everybody dead and the blood about the decks showed why.

He had been blackbirding on a schooner that the Santa Cruzians cut out and showed the long, ridged scar on the back of his shoulder where a tomahawk had bitten; and he had frightened the cannibals off by hurling a lighted powder-keg amidships. Once he had been rich: gambling at Broome he had won a pearl big enough to buy a hundred-ton schooner; then somebody had doped the whisky and he awoke without a cent and went to sea the next morning on a trader.

Desdemona never listened to exploits more valorous or more thrilling; but unlike *Desdemona*, the girl sat in silence, except for an occasional prompting question, and the night veiled her eyes when she was most thrilled.

She had nothing to say about herself in turn. At any mention of the *Trenton* an expression of pain would cross her face and she would turn away.

Thus their lives went on for days, for weeks.

Chuck slept in the open except when it rained, then he took to a sort of leaf blanket that he had made for himself.

Time was not heavy on his hands. There was plenty to do. Food especially was not easily got with regularity. He once killed two huge frogs, the two of them weighing close to five pounds; but hungry as she was, the girl refused to touch the roasted legs. His clam ax, cunningly thrown, broke the back of a small monitor lizard; and cutting it up in secret and

broiling small pieces when she was out of sight, he served it on pandanus leaves and vowed that it was fish.

In fishing he was often sadly put for bait, and she watched with shocked eyes and even a sense of foreboding when he would strike down butterflies with a small branch, and, brutally pulling off the brilliant wings, would stick the fuzzy bodies on to the sharp shell's point.

She found the fish that he managed to catch delicious when they were rolled in green leaves and baked between hot stones, though she could not bear to watch him him cutting away at the throats of live fish or see his blood-stained fingers tearing and cleansing them for baking. Those who are born in cities never associate the choice meats of their dinners with the red, dripping hands of the butcher.

V



THEN came the night when they sat in the moonlight about the little fire that smoldered heatlessly beneath the green wood and gave out choking smoke almost as annoying as the mosquitoes. Between them and the beach a lone pandanus tree, like some grotesque candelabrum on which were perched a flock of miniature scarecrows, reared its bare twisted arms that upheld drooping tufts of leaves. Behind them the jungle.

Overhead the top branches revealed their swaying traceries against the moonlit sky, but the leafy panoply veiled the ground and the depths of the bush were black as though the moon had been blown out by the strong wind. Somewhere, far back in the bush, two branches moaned with eery dissonance as they rubbed together.

"I wish you would find them," she said, pressing her tapering fingers to her ears and nervously glancing backward.

"Like lookin' fer a perticular bucket o' water in the ocean," Chuck said as he slapped his bare shoulder with a blow hard enough to have felled a man and killed a mosquito. And he added, "What makes ye jumpy night-time?"

"The dark—the jungle is so black. I expect monsters to come out of it. Huge dragons with red eyes and smoke from their mouths. Something like that. It isn't savages. I don't feel that way in the daylight when cannibals are most

likely to come, if there are any about. It's fearfully lonely—at night."

"You ain't alone. What'd ye do if I wasn't here?"

"Don't talk of it, please! That would be—unthinkable."

"Huh."

She had what Chuck would have described as "a way" about her. With a glance, a gesture, an intonation, she could set him back so that he felt as much of a stranger as on the first morning they were together. It was as though she had an invisible cap that she could put on and withdraw from him without seeming to increase the distance between them. He did not understand it. He had seen girls huffish, especially when they found all his money had been spent; but she was nothing like that. She was different and distant.

Chuck, without knowing precisely what it was he wanted, had waited to catch her at a disadvantage, some kind of a disadvantage that would be different from clutching her, as he might have done any hour of the day or night, as he often wanted to do, was sorely tempted to do; and yet, with a peculiar intuition for a fighting man, he knew that taking her forcibly into his hands would not get what he wanted from her. In either one of his hands she would be helpless; but in some way, which he did not at all ponder on, he realized that the psychic distance between them could not be overcome by his legs carrying him toward her or his hands dragging her to him.

With a slight quickening of pulse he saw that he did have her at a disadvantage in talking about what she would do if he was not with her.

"Why not talk 'bout it? Somethin' might happen t' me. Snake-bite. Er one o' them dragon-things—red-eyed and smokin'. What'd ye do?"

"What makes you so unpleasant to-night?" Then she added hastily, just a slight vibrant anxiety in her voice: "You mustn't let anything happen to you, and I won't talk of dragons any more. And please watch out for snakes."

"D' ye be lonesome?"

She sensed the approach of the dreaded danger. He spoke low, and with that in his voice which caused her instinctively to draw her hand further away from him.

Even as she did it, he reached out with awkward tenderness and stroked her shoulder.

"Don't!" she said fiercely, shrinking aside.

Too late she realized that the flash of anger had been a mistake.

He rose to his feet, bent forward and for a moment looked steadily down at her.

Then she was struggling in his arms, and his face, tense, hard-set, was held close to her own.

"Don't! Don't! Don't!" she shrieked, panic-mad and struggling wildly, or trying to.

He held her as one holds a child, a little weak child. His face was so close that his lips almost touched her own.

"Let go! Put me down! You must! Please!"

His arm tightened. He said nothing.

"My God help me! Help me!" she screamed in a fury of fear and anger.

"Nobody can't hear ye."

He said it huskily, as though to reassure himself.

Quick-witted, she became quiet.

"Please put me down. You are hurting me. Please."

"I didn't know I 's goin' t' grab ye when I did. I c'd 've done it long a-fore this. Now you an' me 're here alone—mid-ocean. Maybe for years. Maybe for all 'r lives. It ain't like in a port—'mongst other people. You mayn't like me—much, but——"

In a vague sort of a way he was trying to reason it out within his own head even as he spoke. There they were, a thousand miles from any place, perhaps to stay until they dropped of withering age. Yet with nothing to hinder him but his own self he was even holding his lips back from her own.

"We just gotta live t'gether. I don't wanta hurt you. It's funny. I don't wanta hurt you 'cause I want you to like me. I never felt like that before."

He stopped, consciously bothered by his inability with words; unconsciously disturbed by his inability to think out clearly what he felt and was trying to say.

She saw that he was fumbling in his half-savage, primitive way with right and wrong; and quickly she asked in a quiet, tense voice, for more than life to her seemed hanging on the answer—

"Do you believe in God?"

Chuck straightened up a bit. He ventured hesitatingly:

"Well—yes—I guess so. Ever'buddy does."

"Then put me down!"

He shook his head slowly, stubbornly.

"No. No, that ain't it. I guess God can do best about what He wants. But I ain't bein' careful o' you for Him. It's you. Jest you I don't wanta hurt!"

She knew that he meant it. He was trying to be tender; and honest, too. For a moment, weak, limp from the reaction of dread, she was content to lie in his arms. It was something thrilling to be loved like that, even if one did not wish for the love. But he put her down at once, bending low to set her securely on her feet.

"Thank you," she said quickly.

And out of his arms she became fearful lest he snatch her up again; and she started toward the lean-to which was as near a sanctuary as she had.

At the entrance she turned again and said with an effort in her voice to be friendly, generous, appreciative, and yet not encourage another incident of the kind:

"Thank you. You are truly splendid. And please, please keep away from dragons and things!"

Chuck did not answer. He began slowly to bank his precious fire, carefully spreading leaves to protect the coals from sudden showers.

For a long time she watched him—she, curious and also afraid. He sat motionless in the moon-cast shadow of the spectral pandanus, while the rubbing limbs back in the jungle moaned and shrieked the primitive wo of the forest.

VI



WITH the dawn came a sail.

Chuck, sleeping in the open, and ever an early riser, was awake at the first streak of light, and saw it.

He picked up two long palm leaves and ran down to the beach, waving them.

The bark, some two miles out, seemed standing past the island, but attracted by his signal changed course a little. As soon as he saw she was coming on, he went to call the girl.

Something seemed to drop away from her when she had cupped her hands above

her eyes and stared until convinced that it was not a dream. The illness she had feigned, and much of the time had felt, was gone. She laughed and leaped and clapped her hands; and Chuck gaped at her wonderingly instead of at the bark; and somewhere within grew a something akin to jealous resentment that she should be so elated at the chance of getting off the island and away from him. He would have been ready to stay on and on with her, to work for her, hunt for her, fish for her, cook her food and build her shelter. But she laughed and tossed her hands joyfully.

He wished the bark would go about and make off—leave them.

"You're glad t'go?" he asked.

A trace of wistfulness was in his voice. He prayed that she would say something, something out of gratitude for what he had done and tried to do, even though she did not mean it.

"Glad!" she echoed with arms out-flung expressively. "Oh, to get back to the world again! To see people—just people—and hear the babel of streets! I love life and music and lights. And here! It has been like being entombed without dying. But you! I believe you have—have really enjoyed it all. You look sorry to leave!"

"I am." And he sighed heavily, awkwardly.

An expression came into his eyes and lingered: and seeing it she was near to laughter, and felt almost disgusted with him. The night before he had been honest, fearful, almost terrible. She could forgive that. She had feared him because he seemed to have something in him of the heedless force of the wind, of the sea; and her fear, though real to the point of muted agony, was also akin to admiration—even as for the sea when it is battering a ship that it means to have go down.

But Chuck Flynn breathing the sighs of *Romeo*—Chuck Flynn, who plucked radiant wings from moths and squashed the drab, clutching little bodies on a shell hook, who ripped entrails from brilliantly scaled fish with his fingers—for him to be gawking at her with glazed silly eyes of the pining lover, was sickening!

"You men!" she said contemptuously, turning away with a shudder.

He did not know what she meant, but

he knew what she meant to convey, and he was stunned to silence. How he had so outraged her was beyond imagining. He was deeply hurt. She was beyond understanding. But he realized how vain of him to have hoped that he could ever be anything more than a hewer of wood and a carrier of water to her. Yet he was surprisingly without anger toward her. She was like some dreamed-of woman rather than one ever met with; and he wished then, above all things else, that she might know how hurt he was and how devoted too.

He could not have accounted for his chivalry, even if he had realized that it was chivalry, any more than he could have genealogically accounted for the strain of knightly blood that might possibly have sifted down to him as it has to countless humble wayfarers who, after long years of crude manners and rough living, are surprised by strange impulses which, like the tidal-wave, oversweep all others and often commit the lawless, reckless, brutal man to surprising attitudes of gallantry.

The bark had not dropped anchor, but hove to and lowered away a boat in which were six blacks and a white man who steered with an oar; and it came through the surf stern on. When the boat reached shallow water the blacks leaped out and shoved the lightened boat up almost to the edge of the sand.

The man, a big square-built brute with a beard that hid his face, stepped out, and said roughly—

"Who are you people?"

He had looked at the girl and spoke with a kind of proprietary gruffness, much as might have been expected if he had owned the island.

Chuck answered:

"Off the *Trenton* bound fer Sydney. She's lost. We made here on a raft. Been here 'bout three mont's."

"Who's that?" the bearded one demanded, his eyes still on the girl.

"Don't know."

Chuck's voice was sullen. He resented the other's tone and eyes.

"Don't know! Been with her three months—alone!"

The voice was insulting, shamefully insinuating; and he turned toward Chuck with the manner of one who does not propose to be gulled by fiction: with the

manner of a man of the world, who knows men—and women.

"I do not know!"

Chuck said it with challenging iteration, drawing the words through a contracted throat, slowly, insultingly.

"'Sir' to me! I'm Captain Felsburg. And I've got a place for you in the fo'c'sle."

The captain's voice was loud, bullying. He was parading himself before the girl, putting this roustabout seaman in his proper place.

"When I git in your fo'c'sle I will—not afore!"

Chuck's body was rigid, his arms drooping stiffly with elbows half-crooked. He stood, feet wide apart, leaning slightly forward, and for a moment was like some figure of cast bronze as he waited for Captain Felsburg to take up the challenge of man to man.

But Captain Felsburg did not take it up. He glowered for a moment, then turned his bushy face toward the girl, addressing her with a sort of familiar suavity, or what passed with him for suavity:

"I'm glad to be o' service, lady—" extending a hand which the girl did not seem to see—"must 've been bad—all alone with a fellow like him. Such a pretty little girl, too! Just come 'ith me."

She stood indecisive for a moment, and cast a furtive, appealing glance at Chuck. But Chuck did not see her: his eyes were on the captain.

She stepped toward the boat: there might not be another in a lifetime to bear her back to the world she loved. The captain stooped to lift her so that her feet—bare feet at that—might not be dampened at the edge of the sand; but she pulled away gracefully, with a chill, impersonal: "I'm all right, thank you," and unheeding what water might touch her feet got into the boat.

The captain followed with a "Shove off" to the black boys.

"Wait—get him!" the girl cried anxiously, pointing past the captain at Chuck. "Don't you see we are going?" she called.

"Get in—or stay there," the captain shouted, not caring in the least, and showing it, whether Chuck came or stayed.

For a swift moment, Chuck was ready to stay behind. There was that within him which gave the urge to tell the captain

to go to the devil. For a moment's insolent pride he was ready to exile himself alone on the island.

"Come on," she called impatiently. "What's the matter with you?"

She had seen men before who wanted to be coaxed, petted into doing exactly what they wished to do. But it was not wholly unselfish of her to want Chuck on board the ship with her. The fear of being alone with Captain Felsburg was greater than any fear she had known when alone with Chuck.

Chuck came to the boat and started to get in.

"Lend a hand there in shovin' off," the captain roared. "'Fraid to get your little footsies wet! Get to the bow!"

Chuck sullenly obeyed.

When the boat drew alongside the bark the captain roared for Guigo, but Guigo did not show up.

As soon as they were on deck he sent one of the black boys for the mate, then turning to Chuck said—

"For'ard, and stay there!"

"Aye, aye, sir," Chuck replied as he turned away without looking at the girl who watched him with sympathetic, pitying eyes.

"And no soldierin', mind you. Smart's the word on my ship, or you'll taste a bit of tarred end between your shoulders," the captain shouted after him.

Chuck went forward, his seaman's eyes noticing the ungreased masts, the coils at loose ends about the deck, the general lack of tidiness. He climbed the forecable ladder and went into the bow where he stood looking out at the sea. It was an effort not to glance aft.

He stood there for a long time. He heard the chatter of natives about him, the patter of feet on the forecable, and sighting by the island he could tell that they were putting slowly out to sea. But he did not look around.

VII



A SUDDEN blow from behind—a voice shouting:

"You fella damn! Why no get up—"

Chuck wheeled with clenched fist drawn back.

A withered Kanaka, naked to the waist,

with a little ball of twisted hair dangling on his breast as an ornamental charm, jumped nimbly back shouting:

"Lookie out. Me matee. Lookie out——"

Chuck dropped his fist. The captain would want nothing better than for him to use it.

The Kanaka looked Chuck Flynn over in the silent, staring manner of a native. The expression of one who has seen something unexpected was in his eyes. He moved forward a little and stretched his neck so that he could again see Flynn's back, then transferred his gaze to Flynn's face, covered with a short, red beard. The Kanaka stared for seconds; then glanced apprehensively over his own shoulder, and said—

"You Buckee Finn, hai?"

Chuck looked sharply into the Kanaka's face, but what he found there did not touch his memory.

"Yes," he said doubtfully.

Men had called him "Bucko Flynn" when he sailed as a mate on the black-birder, for he was a hard mate and had a hard-driven crew.

"Hai!" The Kanaka chuckled. "Him fella cap'n tella me, 'Guigo, put ax in that fella beach-comber head if him no do what you tella him.' My word. Him fool."

Guigo clucked rapidly two or three times in a way that simultaneously expressed contempt for the captain, respect for Flynn and pleasure at seeing him.

"Guigo?" Chuck repeated half-aloud.

"Me fella Guigo. Yah. Hai?"

Chuck shook his head slowly.

"One year, two year, long time more," Guigo said, indicating that it had been many years indeed, "you fella on him *Minosa*. Me too. Helleebig fight. Blundy Bay. Hai?"

"Sure I remember," Chuck said with interest. "You fella 'Dingo Pete,'" he added, calling to mind the nickname, such as white sailors carelessly and indiscriminately fasten on to black ones whose native names they seem perversely determined never to learn or to use if they do learn them.

"Dingo Pete! Hai. Tck. Me fella Dingo Pete. Tck. Tck. Me matee along him fella cap'n. My word! Sonofapig!"

And as he said it, Guigo glanced again apprehensively over his shoulder.

South Sea natives—all wild men—are quick to get at the real solid substance that white men have inside of them. Guigo knew the manner of man that Chuck Flynn was: hard and square and not afraid. In the fight at Bundy Bay, sometimes known as Bloody Bay, the cannibals had come on board to trade, smuggling with them sawed-off tomahawks and knives; and when the deck was crowded with some two-score they had cut loose.

The captain was brained in the trade-room before he had time to cry out. The Government agent was hacked to pieces at the table where he was recruiting a boy that pretended he wanted to go to Queensland. The white carpenter was caught and butchered across the main hatch.

Bucko Flynn had dived below into the captain's cabin, knocked in a keg of powder kept for recharging cartridges, and at the fearful risk of his own neck as well as that of setting fire to the ship, had poured coal-oil out of the captain's lamp on to a twisted newspaper, buried an end of it in the powder-barrel, then lighting the other end, rushed up the companion-way, and dropped it off the bridge on to the Santa Cruzians that were fighting about the after-deck-house.

The deck-house was wrecked and a hole was blown in the deck, but the cannibals rained into the ocean. Most of those that weren't blown into it leaped overboard in their frantic haste to get off a ship that fought with fire and thunderbolts. Chuck had leaped back when the keg dropped, and snatching an ax from its case under the skylight, jumped into the waist of the ship while the thick cloud of powder smoke and smoldering wood still sifted up through the rigging.

The white cook, two white seamen, and a half-dozen blacks who had barricaded themselves in the galley or fo'c'sle, came out and helped clean up the ship. One cannibal had struck from the rear at Chuck's head and caught him on the shoulder. But the fighting was over. The few that were left of the Santa Cruzians went pell-mell overboard, and some of them did not rise again. Guigo had seen it all from the vantage of a royal yard where he had climbed in hasty discretion.

Now he himself had become mate of a thieving trader's bark, and had been given orders to haze and worry this same Bucko

Flynn whom chance had brought on board.

South Sea Islanders will feed a man and then cook him. They are treacherous beyond belief, and quickly learn the vices that come with commerce and education; but they are not capable of the white man's meanness, and though for the most part lacking the physical courage of the Saxon, they are loyal to the death for those whose friendship they value. If they kill one when he least expects it, they will die for one when he least expects it; and when they serve their friends they do not stop at the deaths of others.

Guigo had been in the trade-room stealing tobacco when Captain Felsburg came alongside; and thinking it better to take the time to hide evidence of his thievery than promptly to answer the call, Guigo had delayed getting out on deck. When the captain had told him to make life miserable for the white man forward, Guigo had rather expected to enjoy the unusual opportunity and repay this particular white man for what he had suffered from many.

He had soon heard the wherefore of the captain's grudge from six lips; for the boat crew, though they understood few of the words, knew that the men had quarreled over a woman—no matter what their words had been about.

"Why you fella stop along him?" Guigo indicated the island.

Chuck told him.

The withered native stood fingering the little hair ball on his breast and gazed speculatively over the bow. Something of importance was on his mind. Now and then he clucked, *tzk, tzk, tzk* to himself, and looked questioningly at Flynn. But he said nothing.

"How many hands?" Chuck asked.

Guigo held up nine fingers absently as though answering without interrupting his thoughts.

Presently he said—

"Bimeby me come back."

Then he slipped down the ladder where Flynn saw him squatting among the crew, chattering argumentatively and occasionally gesturing in the direction of the fore-castle deck. The palaver lasted most of the morning, and with a few interruptions in working the ropes and trimming sail continued into the afternoon. The crew did not sit about together all that time, but moved about in twos and threes, coming

again to Guigo and questioning him, arguing, going away, and with tropical deliberation debating something of importance to them.

Along in the afternoon Captain Felsburg came forward. He had been drinking and he was looking for Chuck Flynn.

"Hey there! You — lazy beachcomber, I've been lookin' all over the ship for you. I'll teach you to hide away. Get a bucket and swab and come aft. Scrub paint work. Do you hear me? Well, move lively there. And no lip or I'll spread you over a hatch and let the mate warp your hide."

Flynn had borne a hand with a will in in whatever work he had seen being done. But he said nothing to the captain. Merely got a bucket and followed him on to the poop.

The girl was there, leaning against the taffrail and looking back toward the island that had become like a cloud on the horizon.

"Get busy there. Get busy!" the captain roared.

The girl turned around. Her face was drawn and tense. Chuck did not look at her. The captain had brought him aft because she was on deck.

It was the first time that Chuck Flynn had ever been hazed on any man's ship. He had sailed with villainous skippers, but the most villainous had never jumped him. Black thoughts boiled in his head; but the traditions of the sea were strong within him, and the most heinous crime of the sea is to lift an angry hand against the skipper.

Chuck looked about for paint work. Strictly speaking, there was none: only the scabby surface of what had once been laid on with brushes. He dipped his swab into the bucket of salt water and began to rub the flaked companion-way hatch.

"Harder there. Harder. Put a little life into it. Have to find some work you can do. You're no seaman. Not worth the laziest nigger on board."

The captain was obviously talking for the ears of the girl. She knew it. Chuck knew it. Even the Kanaka at the wheel knew it, and the Kanaka grinned mirthlessly. He also knew what the black boys were whispering among themselves.

In the girl's eyes was the vacant, incredulous stare of one who sees and hears such things as leave her wondering if she does not dream. She knew something of

men, something of sea-faring men. She had thought that she knew them in all their moods, jealousies, hatreds, and brutalities, as well as gallantries. But she was unspeakably amazed that Captain Felsburg should try to impress her with such coarse injustice.

She pitied Flynn as a woman can pity one of whom she is slightly contemptuous for enduring a bully. His stories of recklessness told about the smoking fire floated back through her mind as the boastings of a man who knew that the bulk of his body and the weather-worn appearance might encourage a woman to believe that he really was capable of such things.

Yet on the other hand she knew that a seaman should never strike a skipper. She knew that the captain was lord and master of his craft: few women knew that better than she, or were more versed in the traditions of the sea. But Chuck Flynn's cowed spirit seemed to her, in a sense, a betrayal. She felt that the presence of Flynn on the ship ought to give her a sense of security, such as she, or any woman, would wish for in the presence of Captain Felsburg—a great, squat, bearded, barrel-like fellow. She was fearful of the approaching night—of the nights and days to come.

Chuck rubbed away at the paint work, or what there was of it. He was careful not to splash water on to the deck, and frequently went to the side and dipped the bucket overboard for clean water to wash off the streaks left by the swab. As well try to clean paint work with dish-water as with salt water. But the captain enjoyed it.

He abusively pointed out streaks that Chuck had been over and over, roared menacingly when a little water dropped to the deck, and explained to the silent, frightened girl that this fellow was sulking and dangerous, but that he, Captain Felsburg, knew how to handle rascals of the kind. Captain Felsburg had handled lots of them, worser 'an him; and there was no sulking or soldiering on his ships. Not much, there wasn't. Might God blast him if there was!

"Now, miss," the captain said when he had tired of watching Chuck, "there ain't no accommodations for ladies on board. Seldom honored, I am by 'em." A long laugh at the pleasantry. "But I'm giving

my cabin up to you. I'll make out. Ho, yes, I'll make out!" Further laughter by the captain. "And you'll be snug and trim in an' old sea-dog's bunk."

The girl thanked him in a perfunctory sort of a way and turned her back on him, again staring toward the dim haze that marked the island. She thought of the butterflies whose wings Chuck had pulled off: she felt helpless as one of them. A lonely woman, and alone. She was afraid.

Too, it was the dismal hour of the day for those who are lonely: sunset at sea. In each direction, as far as the eye carried—except for a faint cloud-like spot, the island—was blue-black water that rose and fell in long swells like the heaving of a cosmic bosom. Darkness seemed rising like imperceptible smoke up from the ocean which grew black first; and the darkness lifted itself until it clouded the sky, which had for a few minutes blazed like a celestial conflagration with the rays of the sunken sun.

VIII



WHEN Chuck went forward with his empty bucket and wet swab, his hazing over for a time, he looked into the twilight and unutterable curses filled his throat. But he did not throw the heavy bucket down clatteringly; and he wrung out the swab and spread it carefully to dry. It was part of seamanly tradition to be careful of ship's gear.

He sat down on the forward hatch and, staring between his feet, fell to wishing that he had never left the island—that he had never let her leave it. Only the night before he had been close to her, for a moment had held her in his arms. Now she was as distant as though she were in the moon. And if during the night the wind had blown a mile an hour faster the bark would never have seen them at dawn. If at sundown the night before the captain had altered his course less than a point, he would never have come near to them. By such caprices are the lives of men and women shaped.

Chuck wondered sullenly if she did not smile mockingly to herself, remembering how easily she had kept him at a distance. Aye, if he had it to do over again—and he evoked the more significant moments that he had been with her: the first glimpse of

her face in the lightning glare; the first stir of life on the reef; the pale child-like beauty of her face as she lay unconscious on the sand where he had laid her in the warm sun; the curious gaze of her dark eyes as she looked upon him when he came back to her that morning; a hundred flashing glances that followed as the days passed; her sudden, fierce anger and fright when he had snatched her from the ground; the inexplicable reproach of her face and words as she had for no reason that he could comprehend said, 'You men!' when the boat was coming through the surf.

Aye, if he had it to do over again he would do as he had done, though through it all and after all he was nothing to her. She was going back to the lights, life and music that she yearned for, back to the ways of her own people; and he, he would go down to the sea and to the roistering ports of far lands as before.

The soft pattering of bare feet that stopped before him caused Flynn to look up.

"I tell 'em black boys you Bucko Finn. I tell him fella make *Minosa* go home when cap'n die."

Chuck said nothing.

"My word! Black boys say him fellas like if Cap'n Felbugee die."

Guigo waited; but Chuck remained silent.

"I take him fella beard when he chop 'im an' make *tindalo*. Him fella too much *mana*. My word! Him fella no feel 'em."

Guigo was explaining that he had taken the trimmings of Captain Felsburg's beard and made a death-charm according to native fashion; a charm that is considered fatal, but in this case the captain had too much *mana*—a sort of vague, undefined, but potent quality that keeps men well, empowers them with strength, and even makes their ghosts formidable.

Flynn listened attentively, but he said nothing.

"Black boys like if him fella die."

And having paused to let that sink in, Guigo added:

"Black boys like if you fella be cap'n. My word! If Felbugee die no fella know what of. Hai? Black boys no tell. Like you fella Finn be cap'n."

True, too true! If Felsburg should go overboard and the blood-stains were carefully scrubbed out of the deck, Flynn could write what he pleased in the log—fever, diabetes, anything!

"Mary like too if Felbugee make *kai-kai* for sharks," the image of Satan whispered into Flynn's ear. "*Tck. Tck.* Palienty whisky in cabin. An' Mary. My word!"

Any white woman is "Mary" to a Melanesian.

"Me make 'em *tindalo*," Guigo encouraged, fingering his hair-ball charm. "You fella have *mana*. My word! *Minosa mana*."

Very powerful *mana* indeed, Flynn had shown at Bundy Bay; and that, assisted by Guigo's exorcisms, could not fail—so he was insisting—to put an end to Captain Felsburg.

"No," Chuck Flynn said slowly. "No, Dingo. Nothin' like that. Make all the *tindalo* ye want, but——"

"My word! You fella no help? *Tck. Tck.* Me fella make devil-shooter. *Tck. Tindalo* palienty 'strong. You fella look out. Hai? Witch man tell me, 'Guigo, bimeby him fella—' touching the hair-ball charm—'work fine. No work one time. No work two time. Try 'im three.' Hai? Him work, you bet. You fella, Buckee Finn, look out!"

Thus with the parting instruction for Flynn to watch closely for the result of the third attempt to conjure the spirit of Captain Felsburg from his body and vindicate the magic hair-ball, made with fasting and much mumbling of words over dead men's bones by some witch-man in whom he had unshakable faith, Guigo pattered away along the deck-house and disappeared.

The night was warm and Flynn had too much trouble of mind to notice the hardness of the hatch cover, so he laid himself across it and gave up his thoughts to idle speculation on the mutinous proposal that Guigo had brought. Nothing would come of it. No. Once they were in port he could lie in wait at some grog-shop entrance and settle with Felsburg as one man with another. On the high seas—no. It was not so much the thought of what would happen, for though the natives might babble until white officers heard and investigated, yet with a little precaution that could pretty well be prevented; but Flynn was beyond murder, cold-blooded murder, such as Guigo had cunningly suggested with oblique words.

Flynn's brain swam through the vagaries that precede a restless man's fall into sleep, and the face of the girl was the one steady figure in all the fantasies. He dozed off.

IX



A HAND shook him in nervous haste. He growled in the impatience of sleepiness; and Guigo whispered hurriedly into his ears.

"What's that?" Flynn cried, starting up, his body warm with the suffusion of rage unutterable.

Guigo repeated:

"Felbugee in Mary's cabin. Her make hellownoise for you fella. Come quick!"

"He's in the cabin with 'er? That —— dog!"

"Mary fight an' kick an' squall. Me look down skylight. 'Finn, Meester Finn!' she yell."

Flynn leaped to his feet and turned aft; but Guigo caught him by the arm for a second and pressed the hilt of a knife into his hand. With a glance Flynn scrutinized it, then ran down the waist of the ship as a leopard leaps.

In the darkness Guigo stood with grinning face, his fingers clasping the charm on his naked breast. His gods, too, move in a mysterious way their wonders to perform. Then he followed.

Flynn bounded up the poop ladder, leaped to the skylight and peered below. He swore fierce oaths down at what he saw from there. Hot blood foamed from his heart and poured like molten metal through his veins. He drove a heavy fist at the skylight, crying out again and again to make himself heard below. But neither blows nor voice were heard.

One jump and Flynn was at the bottom of the companion-way.

The door of the cabin was not locked. Felsburg had seemed to think that would be but idle precaution, or else was too drunk to think of it at all. Certainly the girl never reached it.

Flynn threw open the door and roared in his heavy, hoarse voice trained to rise above the wind:

"Back from that girl! —— you! Back! Get away!"

Felsburg surprised, enraged, whirled. But he did not let go.

Only one arm dropped away from her, snatched at his pocket and was extended behind a revolver.

She, weak beyond endurance, hung panting against him. Her eyes were wide and strained with fear. Terror, stark

terror, was in them. But at the sight of Flynn she gave an inarticulate cry, and pulled feebly to free herself. But Felsburg's powerful arm gripped her the tighter, raised her clear of the floor, and slowly, behind the leveled revolver, he backed to the bulkhead across from the door.

His voice was remarkably steady as he cursed Flynn and ordered him to go forward. He swore that if Flynn so much as stepped inside the cabin he would shoot. Felsburg was not a born killer or he would have shot without talking about it. He had the bully's weakness for insulting words. He swore with awful oaths that nobody should meddle with him, and that if Flynn did not shut the door and get away, he would have him, Chuck Flynn, triced up and make him watch!

Flynn knew that he meant it. He knew that the captain with the revolver could cow the black boys if they were called. He knew that it was death or the next thing to it to rush across the cabin and come to grips. But he leaped—leaped straight forward.

The revolver roared deafeningly.

Flynn staggered, hit in the chest.

The ship seemed to whirl like a top: no pain, but an invisible pressure that nearly reeled him backward.

The distance across the cabin stretched itself tenuously, but he went on—on—on.

Again the reverberant roar. The spit of flame seared his eyes. The staggering blow smote his chest. But Flynn had crossed the cabin.

Overhead a knife gleamed. A downward flash. The knife was sheathed in the bearded neck of Captain Felsburg; and he, clutching at his neck, strangling hideously, lurched forward, fell, and soon was dead. The knife was still in his throat.

The girl, released, sank back exhausted, against the bulkhead and stared at Flynn. She knew what he had done. She knew why. She could not speak. There was so much to say that she was silent. Weakly she put out a hand to him; but Flynn, momentarily straight, triumphant, towering contemptuously over the dying man, felt the cabin swirl and sway; and dizzily clutching to save himself caught at the captain's bed and fell backward across it as the grinning Guigo came through the door.

It was hard to breathe and there was

blood in his throat. He coughed painfully, and pressing his hands against his chest felt the warm blood.

Guigo stood over him, and the girl, coming close, laid her hands tenderly against his face. She murmured incoherent words of thankfulness and grief, and tears ran down her face and dropped on his red-stained chest.

Flynn's glazed eyes cleared. Something seemed to have stirred his memory. He half-raised himself, and her arms slipped behind his head to hold him up. His eyes, grown fierce and bright, were on Guigo's face. Suddenly a huge hand reached out and snatched the little hair-ball charm from the native's neck, snapping the frail string. Flynn pressed it against his own chest until it was daubed with blood, then with shaking arm extended it again.

"My blood—watch her or it damns you! Get 'er to white men's port—lights—music—" He spoke with effort, but he spoke tensely. His brain already was feverish. "My *mana* go t' him fella—" shaking the charm before the frightened, tremendously impressed Guigo, who hesitated to take it again. "You sail straight. My ghost ride mainsa'l yard an' watch! Don't touch 'er. Don't come near 'er. You die like that dog there!"

Flynn's eyes blazed as he bent forward and pointed at the dead body.

Guigo, ever fearful of curses, yet eager for the promised *mana* that such blood could give, warily took the little hair-ball charm, stained with red, and drew away. Already the girl was *tapu*—sacred.

Flynn's head dropped to one side and rolled on his shoulder. His eyes were shut. Gently she let him lie back, and she sank on her knees beside him, making that low moan that is womankind's own cry of wo. And she sobbed, sobbed the wish that they had never, never left the island! Again and again she said it. And she called upon him not to die. For her sake she begged him to live on, vowing the reckless words of a woman who has found love and death meeting by the side of the man she had scorned. She kissed his rough, cold face over and over with the passion of despair. Then she slid to the floor with her hands hopelessly uplifted in prayer.

Dawn came and Chuck Flynn was dead.

X



LONG before dawn, Guigo, driving his crew as became one who wore so powerful a charm, had hoisted two tar-barrels on to the forecstle; and he waited for daylight. He knew the magic of tar-barrels. He had sailed on a ship before—one that had found its casks filled with salt water by a knavish mate who deserted on a copra island—that used tar-barrels; and with the sunrise he set fire to one of the barrels and waited. Help must come, for he knew no more of laying a course than of weighing the stars.

The morning passed. He fired the other barrel, and along toward the middle of the afternoon a speck pushed its way over the horizon, and it rapidly grew and grew until a mighty steamer, passenger-laden, turning far from its course to answer the signal of distress, churned alongside. From the bridge a man in uniform with a megaphone called out to know what could be the trouble with a trim bark, all sails set, and a crew on deck?

The captain could make no sense of Guigo's shrill replies. He sent a boat across and was disgusted when the first officer returned to report that a seaman had killed the skipper and was himself apparently dead, and that the woman begged to have a doctor come, and that they both should be taken on board the steamer.

The captain pulled out his watch, estimated the distance from his course, and the time lost.

"She doesn't look that kind, sir," the first officer said without prelude or explanation.

The captain sent the ship's surgeon and told him to hurry, and do whatever could be done in the least time.

The surgeon had been long on ships. And after he had looked at the woman he spoke to her in a curious, incredulous way and asked who she was? And she, as though suddenly remembering, told him; and she told him of how the *Trenton* had gone down, and of the raft and the island, and of Chuck Flynn, and of Felsburg and the fight.

And when the surgeon, tenderly assisting her, had helped her across and on to the steamer, the captain forgot his watch and the time lost. Sharply he ordered the purser to make ready the best suite, and make haste, too.

She was borne into it with tender solicitous hands, and two stewardesses fluttered almost panically about, and a nurse hung over her bed. The captain nervously paced the bridge and impatiently watched the deck of the little schooner where the men he had sent were busy giving Chuck Flynn an honorable burial at sea, where the first officer stood, prayer-book in hand, reading the solemn, beautiful service. She had wished it, she had ordered it; and she—she was the daughter of the man who owned that steamer, who had owned the *Trenton*, and who owned a hundred ships, steam and sail, that shuttled from the ports of England to the ports of the Far East and South and back again.

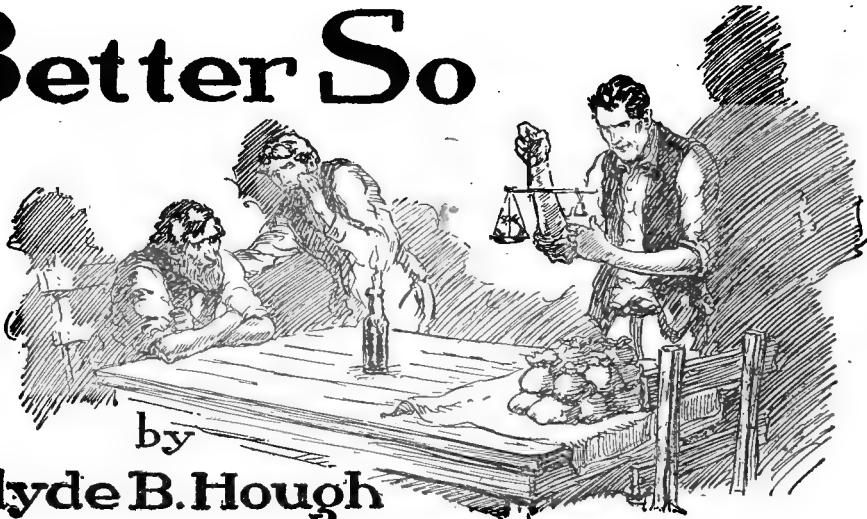
THE TRADER

BY IRA SOUTH

SMOLDERING eyes light up again,
Slow tepid blood starts strong,
As the schooner shakes her canvas out,
And the fresh wind bowls along.

They say there are pearls among the reefs,
And wealth to be got in trade,
But little care for such as these,
So certain ghosts be laid.
Aye, little care for things like gold,
So certain ghosts be laid.

Better So



by
Clyde B. Hough

Author of "Two Calls in the Jungle," "Red's Example," etc.

BENSON and his outfit reached the site of his claim, on the twentieth of June. In two days, they had coaxed and cursed and shouldered three heavy-loaded burros thirty miles up the rugged Sierra Nevada. But now they had arrived and camp was made. The burros, freed of their packs, flopped their long ears and nipped the tender boughs. The late sun, a molten disk of gold, was already sliced by the western horizon. A thin spire of blue smoke mounted skyward and the aroma of crisp bacon and steaming coffee freighted the keen mountain air.

The three men around the camp-fire ate in silence. Not sullen silence; but peaceful—the kind of silence that comes to men of the open at twilight.

Half an hour passed. Supper was finished. Purple shadows stole up miniature cañons and slowly, imperceptibly, darkness bulked the tree-shapes. The men pulled on their coats, lit their pipes, hunched a little nearer the fire and began to talk. Miller, an ever cautious man, and particularly so where money was concerned, started the conversation.

"Boss," he began, "you said we'd be up here 'bout five months. You aimin' to pay us off every month, ain't you?"

"Hadn't thought any about it," said Benson. "As a matter of fact I haven't got any coin here, but I brought a pair of scales along. So if you boys want to be paid off

every month I can weigh your wages out in dust."

"Thet'll suit us better." It was Watson who spoke this time and he spoke as, apparently, he was accustomed to do, for both Miller and himself. "You see," he continued, "we've seen a lot o' pay-dirt peter out; Miller and me has. So we allus feels better if we has our share in our belts."

"Well," Benson replied, "if it makes you boys feel right to have the dust in your belts, I want you to have it there. Because I know you'll work right if you feel right; and it shore means a heap to me just how much of the yellow we take out between now and the last of November."

"You hinted at somethin' o' the sort 'fore we left Lodeville," spoke Watson. "Why don't you tell us what you mean? Hintin' does no good; only makes a fellow cur'ous."

"I was thinking of that," answered Benson, "and I think, as you say, Watson, I'll tell you boys what I mean—tell you the whole story. You'll savvy then, why we got to use every minute of daylight.

"You see it's this way: my missus has always wanted a home of her own—not a mere shack but a home with a library, a morning-room, a sun-porch and such like. She used to picture it all out to me before we was married and I promised her then that I'd get her a place just like that.

"'And I want it in Frisco,' she would always add after I had promised. We both lived in Grass Valley, then.

"It has always been her big dream, that home in Frisco. But somehow I've never played in much luck and I've had to keep stalling her off all the time; been feeding her on promises, as you might say, for the last five years. We been married just five years this Spring and every Winter I've worked for wages and every Summer I've prospected. And most every year I've struck a little pay, anywhere from two to five hundred dollars for the season; and one year I opened a pocket that give me nine hundred dollars' worth of the yellow. Then it petered out on me just when I was beginning to believe in it. But that was a pocket; not a placer claim like I got here. Well, as I was saying, I never struck much luck—not till this year, but she shore has come my way this year.

"When I left Lodeville early in April I had a hunch that things were going to break right for me this time. I just felt that I was going somewhere in particular. Didn't do any panning at all the first three days out; just kept climbing up till I reached this spot. I can't explain it, but I tell you boys what I say is Gospel; the minute I see that elbow in the creek down below, there, I knew I'd located. Just seemed to recognize it as the place I'd been looking for all these years.

"I set to panning right away and in less than an hour I had more yellow than I had ever taken out before in a whole day. For the next few days I worked like a crazy man. The top soil was loose and soft and I filled two heavy pokes with dust before I woke up to the fact that I didn't own the claim yet. But when I did come alive, you can bet I staked her off, *pronto*, and then hiked for Lodeville and the recorder's office.

"The missus was staying at Lodeville then, so, as quick as I could file and record my claim, I hurried home and showed her the visible proof of our luck. There was, at least, fifteen pounds of dust in them two pokes. About three thousand, six hundred dollars, that. The missus looked at the pokes, opened one and stuck her finger down in the dust. Then her face lit up like a Winter evening lamp and I saw things in her eyes that I knew she never would be able to say; she didn't try.

"The fact is, we both seemed to have a preference for silence. We just sat there and thought our thoughts for a long time. Then Mary—that's her name—came over

and perched herself up on the arm of my chair. She's just the right size to sit on the arm of your chair, Mary is. She looked at the two big pokes for a little and then at me and her eyes were sparkling.

"I can have my home now, can't I?" she says.

"You shore can," I told her and real proud I was, too."

"We both thought the dust I had brought down was enough to buy about anything in Frisco, so we bundled up and took the next train for the big town. The first thing I done when we got there was to change my dust for the other kind of gold that has Uncle Sam's valuation on it. Then we turned ourselves over to one of them real-estate mongers and told him what we wanted. He piled us into a automobile and drove us around the city and showed us places till Mary saw one that suited her.

"The place that she fell for was all furnished up in style and ready to step into. Some foreigner had fitted it up and then, on account of the war, he had to go back to Europe, so he was selling it just as it stood. But when we come to talk price I found that Mary and me were plumb ignorant about the cost of homes in Frisco. Why, I didn't have money enough to buy the furniture. The price of the place as it stood was ten thousand dollars. But the real-estate monger said he could fix that. Said I could buy a option on the place. That is, I could pay what I had and hold the property till the last of November. Then if I pay the full price what I've put down will count, but if I don't raise the money on time I lose the whole business.

"Well, I couldn't disappoint Mary after we had gone that far, so I made the deal, paid him two thousand and agreed to have the other eight thousand in the bank at Lodeville not later than the twenty-ninth of November. Then the bank will wire this real-estate monger in Frisco. Now Mary don't know a thing about this deal. She thinks the house is all paid for. So you see I got to make good. I can't have this real-estate monger go to Mary next Fall and say: 'Here, vacate. You don't own this claim.' He'd do it, too, and glad of the chance. He'd get my money for nothing then and still have his house to sell.

"Yes, I got to make good. I figure I've got to take out, at least, forty-five pounds of dust before the last of November.

Thirty-five pounds to meet this debt and ten to pay you boys and other expenses. But I'm not worrying; I've got the yellow right down there in the dirt and I'm depending on you boys to help me take it out."

"Well, if your claim's got the gold in it we'll do our part ter git it out," said Miller. "Ain't that right, Watson?"

Watson nodded an affirmative and all three men unrolled their blankets and turned in for the night.



SUNUP the next morning found Miller and Watson working the whipsaw with a vigor that made the steel teeth sing as they bit the green spruce. They were getting out slabs for a sluice-box. While some two hundred yards above the claim, Benson was digging a ditch that would carry water down to the sluice-box when it was finished. And so they worked. And day after day the whipsaw sang its song and day after day the pick thudded the earth until the sluice-box was made and the ditch was dug and a rough cabin clung to a shelf-like ledge above the flume.

Then the five months' siege started in earnest. All day long they shoveled and wheelbarrowed dirt. And all day long the muddy, yellow water surged down the flume and washed over the cleats at the bottom of the sluice-box. It was a day of tension, of suspense, the day that would prove the value of the dirt they were taking out. Many times that day Benson was tempted to shut down the gate at the head of the flume, let the water run off and see what was at the bottom of the sluice-box.

But each time he resisted the temptation and not until just before sunset did he shut off the water. The men stood by with the tensy of gamblers and watched the sluice-box run empty. Then the rays of the low-hanging sun slanted along the bottom of the sluice-box and above each cleat showed such a quantity of yellow dust that the three, though miners they were, gasped in surprise. Rich! It was the richest they had ever seen.

When supper was over that night and the red glow of after-sunset flared against the mountainside and the small folk began to chirp and chatter in the trees, Miller and Watson took a long walk. That is, they went for a walk and stayed a long time.

"Looks like a big strike," observed Miller.

"It is," said Watson, "and it's up to you

and me ter see that there ain't no dust left in the dirt, back there, that can be took out 'tween now and November. I reckon you and me understands one another."

"I can read your writin'," answered Miller, "and I'm with you every time."

In the days and weeks that followed Miller and Watson worked with an energy that was not second to Benson's own. With their sleeves rolled to their elbows and their shirts stained with sweat, they worked from the first streak of dawn to the last glint of daylight. And the pokes grew fat and Benson's heart was light in him.

Thus the weeks slipped by on the tide of high spirits till there came an evening when they shut the water off and the sluice-box ran dry and there were only a few flecks of gold on the bottom. For Benson it was as though he had gone to sleep in a mint and had awakened in a poorhouse. He said no word. For the time being he was powerless, even to think.

That night Miller and Watson went for another walk. They stayed late and they talked long and argumentatively, but at last they settled their debate and returned to camp. They found Benson still sitting by the fire outside the cabin door. His head was buried in his hands and the fire had died to a mere glow, a red blotch in the Stygian pool of night.

"I wouldn't take it too hard, Mister Benson," said Watson. "This might be only a sterile layer we've struck. I've seen such before. My advice is to dig straight down tomorrow, shaft-like, you know. Can soon tell that way if there's any pay deeper down."

The next day Benson tried Watson's plan and a few feet down they found dirt that paid a little, but nothing to compare with the former harvest. They shoveled off the payless dirt and began sluicing the little dust that was in the next layer.

The results were discouraging but Benson had recovered from the first shock of disappointment and now he worked harder than ever and much to his satisfaction the hired men followed his example. It was almost unbelievable that men working for wages would work as these two were working. Still, they were doing it, and Benson's heart warmed to them. He silently resolved to give each of them an extra month's pay, if that were possible, when they should knock off work in the Fall.

It was the first of August that the slump came and it lasted, unvaried and discouraging, till the middle of October. At that time Benson was beginning to fear that he would be unable to meet his payment. In the past six weeks, he had taken out barely enough dust to pay the wages of his men. And they had all three worked untiringly from dawn to dusk. The only variation in their days had been the variation of the sun.

Then there came a day when Benson stuck his hand into the sluice-box and felt along the bottom above a cleat. He could feel the dust there, feel the tiny particles as they gave and shifted easily under his touch. It felt as if there must be a double handful above that one cleat. Benson's spirits soared instantly. He ran to the head of the flume and shut down the gate. The water left in the ditch rushed on and soon the sluice-box was empty. There were yellow windrows of dust. They were banked against each cleat, reaching back almost to the next cleat above.

There was more gold in that one day's washing than they had taken out in the three weeks past. Benson scooped it up and let it run through his fingers. The feel of it gave him a new lease on hope. Two more days like that and Mary's home would be safe. Oh, God! Was it possible for such luck to last two whole days?

Yes, it was possible. The luck lasted not only two days but it was still running at the end of a week. Then Benson weighed up his pokes and they totaled forty-five pounds, troy weight, ten thousand dollars at the very least. Of course the logical thing for him to have done would have been to take the ten thousand dollars to the bank at Lodeville. But by that time the fever was on him—the spell of the gold was in his blood and he was no longer logical. He sensed a big clean-up and was determined to stay to the very last day, till the morning of November the twenty-eighth.

But already it was getting cold and they were not prepared for Winter. So Benson sent Miller and Watson, with the three burros, down to Lodeville to get a fresh stock of supplies. The list included a small stove, mittens, mackinaws and snow-shoes. At the mention of snow-shoes, Miller and Watson exchanged startled glances and immediately looked annoyed.

"——," muttered Watson, "I never thought 'bout snow."

Miller gave the other a quick warning look and nothing more was said just then. The next day they set out for Lodeville and the supplies were brought back in record time. Then a lean-to was built against the eastern side of the cabin for the burros, and the work went on.

The heavy run of dust lasted. The snow fell thick and deep, but they shoveled it out of the pit and worked on with burning energy; Miller and Watson as eager as Benson. But the falling of snow worried Benson's hired men not a little and not because of the extra hardship it brought, either.



THE twenty-sixth of November came. Only one more day till Benson must start for the bank with his load of gold. It had already been decided that Miller and Watson should remain at the claim, that Benson should return and that they should work all Winter, or, at least, as long as the weather would permit. Up to that day—the twenty-sixth—the temperature had not been uncomfortably low, but that night a bitter cold clamped down with the suddenness of a sprung trap.

Then came the sleet. All night and till noon of the twenty-seventh, that which left the clouds water, froze and caked wherever it struck. The trees were coated and their boughs encased in a glass-like shroud. The cabin was a miniature iceberg and the woodpile, outside the door, was a mere nub of ice above the snow-level. The snow itself was covered with a crust of ice that broke only now and then under the weight of a man. And the eyes of Miller and Watson registered satisfaction. The sleet, the ice-crust on the snow, particularly, seemed to please them greatly. For some reason they seemed to consider it unexpected good fortune.

About two o'clock the sun broke through and the clouds soon melted away. But the creek was frozen solid, the water would not run, so the men hugged the little stove and did nothing all day.

That night, after supper, Benson took the bulging pokes from the box above his bunk and again weighed them. This time they totaled seventy-five pounds; a little less than eighteen thousand dollars. A man's load it was, but Benson knew that men in Alaska had packed out that much and lived to spend it. He knew, also, that he was the equal of most men and the superior of many in the matter of strength.

So he spread a broad sheet of canvas on the cabin floor, stacked the pokes on the canvas and wrapped and bound them into a solid pack.

"I'll start," Benson told the other two, "at four o'clock in the morning. The sky is clear and the stars will give me light."

While Benson was still at his packing, Miller took a pick and Watson an ax and they left the cabin, ostensibly, to dig out and bring in wood for the morning, and this they did, too. But they did something else first. As soon as they were out of the cabin, Watson drew the hunting-knife that always hung at his belt and carefully cut down a small spruce sapling. He cut it carefully because he did not want to shatter its coating of ice. The sapling was somewhat smaller than a man's wrist and about five feet long.

When the small boughs were trimmed off, Miller took from the front of his shirt two short pieces of rope and one of these they tied to either end of the pole. This done, Miller began to pick logs out of the ice-covered wood-pile, at the same time keeping his eye on the cabin door, ready to give a signal should Benson come out.

Meanwhile, Watson took the pole with the ropes tied to it and went to the west side of the cabin. One end of the pole he tied to the corner of the cabin and the other to a spruce tree at the edge of the narrow ledge on which the cabin stood. Thus the pole, made fast at both ends, covered with ice and unnoticeable, hung about twelve inches above the snow-surface.

It hung, too, directly across the ground that Benson was bound to traverse the next morning in order to strike the trail which ran quarteringly down the steep incline and on to Lodeville. The incline began at the edge of the ledge, across which Watson had tied the slender pole, and sloped away down the mountain at a steep angle for more than three hundred yards.

For that distance at least, there was a bare, smooth surface of ice-covered snow. But at the termination of the incline was a fringe of spruce and cedar trees all covered with ice and reaching up like mittened hands, grasping for prey.

It was from among these trees that Miller and Watson expected, the next morning, to take the dead body of Benson. He would start early, unsuspecting. The ice-covered pole would not attract his attention, a

snow-shoe would catch under the pole and Benson would go plunging, surprised and unprepared, down the incline. If his neck was not broken before he completed the descent, he was sure to collide with one of the many trees and that, too, with such momentum that death would be certain.

After that, they would cache the major portion of the gold, repack Benson's pack with a few pokes in it, strap it to his back, throw his body on a makeshift sleigh which they would construct, take him to Lodeville and tell of an accidental death. All they need do was to tell the truth, omitting the rifled pack and the pole across the trail. Besides, the pack still intact, with the gold in it, would corroborate their story.

The plan had been slowly and carefully figured out during those long walks that Miller and Watson had taken. But somehow they had overlooked the fact that there was sure to be snow by the last of November. Therefore, when Benson mentioned snow-shoes, they thought of snow for the first time; and instantly feared defeat of their plan. A plunge over the ledge into the soft, deep snow would be harmless, whereas a plunge over the ledge on to the hard, steep lava surface such as they had originally planned was sure to be fatal.

So when the snow actually fell, Miller and Watson were naturally worried and they began to consider another plan—the knife, which Watson had always favored. But the sleet and the consequent ice-crust had again made the other game seem sure. Now the end was at hand, the trap was set.

After making sure that the pole was securely tied at each end, Watson returned to the wood-pile and the two went into the cabin, each carrying a load of wood. Benson's pack, all securely tied, lay on the floor beside his bunk and on top of it were two pokes of dust, two pounds each. When the men had put down their wood, Benson took a poke in either hand and extended one to each of them.

"I'm not much of a hand at sayin' things," he blurted out, "but you boys touched a soft spot in me the way you worked this Summer and this here is to show you how I feel about it."

He pressed the pokes into their hands, and turned to the stove, filling his pipe.

Whatever the other two men may have felt or thought, they gave no sign. But

they managed to thank Benson in a rough, off hand way.



THE next morning a little before four o'clock, Benson ate his bacon and drank his coffee. After that he fastened his snow-shoes, and as a precaution against accident, he strapped another pair to his chest lengthwise, one over either breast. Then he swung the heavy pack across his shoulders, strapped it on firmly, said, "So long," and went out of the door.

Miller and Watson lay in their bunks, their ears strained and their nerves taut. For a minute or more, they heard the crunch, crunch of Benson's brisk steps on the snow. Then came a snap, a dull thud, a scraping on the ice and they knew that the pole had done its part.

For a while they lay in darkness and tense silence. When at last Miller could stand it no longer, he got up and lit a candle. Still he did not speak, he seemed to be waiting for Watson to speak first. And Watson did speak first and it was not a pleasant speech that he made.

"Well," he said, "you needn't be so all-fired sullen just because you killed a man."

"I ain't killed no man," snarled Miller. "It's you that tied the pole across the path."

"It won't be healthy for you to git the habit o' sayin' that," Watson growled.

He got up and they cooked and ate their breakfast in silence.

"I think I'll strap on the snow-shoes and go down and find him," said Watson when it was finally daylight.

"You will, eh?" said Miller. "You know well that there's but one pair of snow-shoes here since he took that extra pair with him. So you'd like to take the snow-shoes and go down and git the gold and keep on goin' and leave me here to flounder around in the snow with never a chance to catch up with you. I guess not," he concluded.

And like a tiger he bounded across the cabin, grabbed the ax and before Watson could stop him, he chopped their one pair of snow-shoes to pieces.

Watson gripped his knife and started toward Miller, then stopped, seemed to think better of it and replaced the knife in its sheath.

"Aw, what's the use scrappin', Miller? We got to finish this job together."

"All right then," said Miller. "But for God's sake let's git started. I can't

stand to hang around here much longer."

Watson went outside and unfastened the pole he had tied across Benson's path. Then he brought the pole into the cabin, chopped it to small pieces and put them in the stove.

"Can't 'ford to leave any evidence 'round," he said.

Then they went down the incline. The sun of the day before had softened the ice-crust to some extent and without snow-shoes they broke through and sank to their hips in the soft snow at every step. However, they finally reached the foot of the incline and spent several hours floundering around in the snow, looking for their victim. At last they found where he had scrambled to his feet and gone on.

"This is all your fault," said Watson, speaking to Miller. "If we hader knifed him in the first place like I wanted to we'd have the gold now and be on our way."

"Yes, to the gallows," snapped Miller.

"That'll be 'bout all of you," said Watson.

He had always been accustomed to dominate the other man. But now the worm turned, his overwrought nerves could stand no more. Miller sprang at Watson's throat.



WHEN Benson caught his foot under the pole, that morning, and stumbled and fell over the brink of the ledge, he landed square on his chest and the snow-shoes, strapped securely there, took the snow like the runners of a sleigh. And like a sleigh Benson slid furiously down and reached the foot of the incline and by great good luck missed all the trees.

"Now I wonder," mused Benson as he picked himself up and shook off powdered ice, "what the devil it was that tripped me. Well, anyway it was the quickest way I could've got down here."

Three days later, Benson returned to the little cabin above his claim, but he found no one there. He looked around outside and soon found the trail the two men had made as they went down the incline. He followed it down and found Miller and Watson.

They were standing stark stiff, up to their hips in snow. Watson's knife was hilt-deep in Miller's left breast, and Miller's fingers were frozen in a vice-grip on Watson's throat.

Benson wondered and was sorry. He had grown to like Miller and Watson.



The Brooch of Tlaya

A Three-Part Story

by PART II

ANNE THROOP CRAIG
AND
LOUISE RICE

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

THE king was dead. With a heavy heart Princess Fedalm stood on the wild Scotch coast and watched her father's funeral barge move slowly from the shore. Great was Fedalm's grief, when at length she walked from the sea.

Tall and beautiful was the princess. Her hair was deep red, like that of the Norsemen who towered above the short, dark, Pictish people about her on the cliff.

At the open door of the hall of state she paused with a little cry. Within, on the throne which none save the chief might occupy, sat her mother, Queen Tlaya. At the queen's side was the old Druid priest, Kapultep. It was for his influence with the worshipers of the Druid gods that Tlaya showed favor to the withered priest.

Tlaya was a Pict. Her lord had been a Norseman, and he had brought with him his blond followers when he came among the Picts to wed their dark-eyed queen. But the Norsemen liked not the Picts and now Tlaya feared for the unity of her kingdom. But most she feared what might be in the hearts of the king's people when they saw her upon the throne, which was now the rightful place of the Princess Fedalm.

Tlaya addressed the throng:

"My daughter is sick with grief. Think not I am forgetful of her. She will stay at the house of Eric the Pale until such a time as she may choose her destiny."

FOUR moons later a fleet of strange galleys swept into the bay. The dark-haired, blue-eyed men who landed from them held up their hands in signs of friendship.

"We are sons of Dubha," said Seumas, the elder of the two who walked at their head, when Tlaya came to greet them. "Driven from our shores by Sweynie the Red, we seek a land where we may wax strong and make ready to wrest our homes from the invader."

They came from Ierna, which later men called Ireland.

On the way to the hall of state the youth who walked by Seumas' side stopped by a small stone house. Within the open door sat a pale, beautiful girl.

"Eric, tell the stranger to enter, that I may greet my mother's guest," said the girl.

So came Angus the Silver Tongued to know the Princess Fedalm.

A feast was spread in the hall of state. On the throne sat Queen Tlaya. At her feet were Seumas and Angus. The brothers bore themselves with a refinement of manner that stood out sharply among these rough people.

"If you are to be dwellers in this land of mine," spoke the queen, "my commands must be obeyed."

"We shall not dwell in your land, O Queen," Seumas told her. "We build our dun on the other headland."

"That is mine," replied Tlaya sharply.

"Nay," said Angus, and proved his point by the law of those days.

"You shall not build," commanded the queen.

"We begin tomorrow," came the answer as the MacDubhas strode from the hall.

BY MIDSUMMER the dun was near completion. The passing days had brought strength to the Princess Fedalm, and it was of her that Tlaya and Kapultep spoke as they sat one evening in the hall of state.

"Would it not be well," whispered the priest, "and would it not make for the uniting of your kingdom, if a certain one of the royal line were to become high priestess in the fire tower? There her vows would keep her from the sight of her people, to whom her commands would be borne by the voice of the high priest."

Tlaya hesitated. Even her hard heart was moved

by the possible fate of the young girl in the lonely tower. Then she thought of the time when Fedalm should wed and become queen, and she be cast aside.

"Fedalm cares not for your gods," she said. "How shall you win her to them?"

"I shall make a brooch," said Kapultep, "which, when put upon her bosom, shall incline her to do all we require."

As Kapultep and Tlaya left the hall a great, uncouth hound which lay in the shadow of the throne stood erect. It was Arnulf, cousin of Eric, disguised as a dog. The young man went to the house where sat the princess among her loyal retainers, and told what he had heard.

"But my mother——" cried Fedalm.

"She is not your mother," said Rula, her nurse.

VI

WHILE the Summer waxed warm and a steadier light grew in the eyes of the Princess Fedalm, and while Tlaya smiled as gently as she could upon her people—the Norsemen in the kingdom were plotting and scheming under the leadership of Eric the Pale. There were many difficult matters to be considered, however. The Norsemen who had followed Fedalm's father across the sea had grown accustomed to their new home.

Several of them had married Pictish girls. Some had their homesteads without the walls of the fortress, and possessed many cattle. And such as remained fighting men, only, as they had all been in the Northland, had lost that reckless, passionate desire for roaming which they had had earlier in their lives. Hardly any of the Norsemen, therefore, really wanted to do what Eric's fiery young cousin advocated: which was to steal the queen's galleys and sail back to their own land.

On the other hand, they were not strong enough, they feared, to set up a separate kingdom, especially as they had no fortified place from which to fight. What they really all desired was to depose Queen Tlaya, keep the secret of Fedalm's wholly Norse birth from the Picts, and seat the princess on the throne, but this was by no means an easy or safe task.

So, much as it was against their nature, the Norsemen played a waiting game; and so clever were they at it that even the Druid began to think that he would be able to carry off this beautiful prize without creating anything more than some excitement among the people of her father's race.

The girl could only stare. The old nurse continued:

"When your father was a young man he wed a beautiful Norse princess. She died when you were born. In his grief her lord fled to the sea, and came among these Pictish people. Their young and handsome queen healed his grief, as a woman can, and so the two were married. The queen was childless.

"Later came a galley from your father's old land, bringing you, whom he had thought dead.

"You were a wee infant. We who knew were sworn to secrecy. The people were made to believe that you were Tlaya's own offspring. And well I knew 'twas not love for you that made Tlaya frame this deceit."

He was encouraged in this because Fedalm seemed more interested than ever in the priestly lore which Kapultep poured into her ears; and she had even taken a few hints as to the desirability of the royal line upholding the priesthood by taking its vows. Kapultep, whose vanity was none the less for there being no occasion for it, smirked as he told Tlaya that Fedalm was falling under his influence; and the queen, amazed and incredulous, was forced to believe when she saw the girl in long, grave conversations with the priest.

Moreover, this seemed to have its influence, too, upon the Norsemen, who were more respectful to the Druid. At least, they seemed so, and Tlaya, for all her shrewdness, did not perceive that her cunning was being matched with still deeper cunning—deeper because it was inspired by love.

Fedalm had always had a sweet pipe of a voice, and now, again, her humming was heard all around the gloomy hall of state, and on the high lawns and on the stretches of woodland outside the walls where she loved to stray with only old Rula for companion.

But there was a purpose in that, as there was in much that seemed to be merely accidental, within Tlaya's domains that Summer. Eric and Rula feared greatly that Fedalm would be carried off some day without a moment's warning, and so it was agreed that if any Norseman ever heard the princess hum a certain tune, well known to them all, he was to find Eric at once and inform him—and it would mean that the dreaded priest had at last decided to take Fedalm away.

So among the many little airs which the princess sang as she went to and fro among

her women, and in and out of the fortress, there was one which she did not sing, but for which many ears carefully listened; and that was the one which would send her Norsemen flying to her rescue.

But something was destined to bring about quite a different situation than anything which even the shrewd Druid could have foreseen had he been fully cognizant of all that was so carefully concealed from him; something which had been dimly foreseen by only three—the old nurse and Eric and his youthful cousin.

The Princess Fedalm sweetly, dreamily and quite unconsciously fell in love. And this was the way of it.

A week after the stranger chieftains had left the fortress, with Tlaya's wrath rising like a cloud behind them, Arnulf, meeting the girl out for her first walk since her father's death, saluted her, and then clasped hands with her, as his youth and her graciousness permitted; and as he did so, Fedalm found a blossom slipped within her palm.

"What is this?" she asked, smiling.

The youth smiled, also, openly and merrily, but the old nurse who held the girl's arm saw that there was a glint of something not at all merry in his eyes.

"'Tis a secret, O Fedalm," he replied, teasingly.

And Fedalm looked at the blossom and blushed a little, for she knew that it must have been sent her from the young chief, the counterpart of that one which she had sent him. And then she looked grave, for she knew that the queen had forbidden any of her folk to have speech with the men of MacDubha.

"Methinks there is mischief here," she said.

The youth sobered, and while he continued to appear gay for the benefit of any who might be watching, he spoke low and earnestly:

"Eric commended the young stranger to me, O Princess, and I had some slight speech with him while he sat at meat in the hall. A steady eye has he—one that I would trust. So that as I was at my duty of overlooking the watchers of the herds, yesterday, in the wild lands toward the other Head, I met and greeted the young chief, who was hunting. And he gave me this blossom, charging me to present it to you as a token of his dutious friendship; but secretly, for that the queen has refused

fellowship with him and his brother.

"Send the young chief your princely greetings, Sweeting," Rula murmured. "There is no just cause for quarreling with so true and courteous a stranger."

"But—my mother is not friendly to him, Rula," the girl objected, knitting her white brows.

"'Tis nothing of import that the queen holds against him," Rula replied lightly. "In time, no doubt, she will accept the friendship of the new chieftains."

Now this was exactly Fedalm's experience of her mother—that she was often unreasonable in her anger, and as reasonless in her recovery from them. Moreover, Eric had spoken well of the strangers. So the courteous message was sent—dignified and stately, as became a princess, and Arnulf delivered it soon after; for again, by a coincidence which neither sought to explain, he and the Silver Tongue met at the same secluded place, safe from prying eyes and listening ears.

That time the lad brought to Fedalm a wing of a bird—one of a rare beauty, and again took back a message of thanks and friendship.

Then came the revelation of Fedalm's real birth to her, and her knowledge of her danger from the old priest, but although the nurse and the two Norsemen thought much as to how the stranger chieftain might be of service to the young princess, they said not one word to her of their thoughts. Not by so much as a feather's weight would they push on a match toward which they looked for help; but old Rula took her charge frequently without the walls to roam in the freer air there, and Tlaya said not a word against it, for she had planned, if the need were desperate, to take Fedalm away to the fire tower secretly, while she wandered so far from her Norsemen.

Neither did Arnulf say to Angus the Silver Tongued that the princess daily wandered near his hunting-ground; but he did tell him that there was danger in a certain glen of hitting some one should he draw a bow at too great a venture.



BUT although Angus hunted so persistently in that glen—or, to speak more clearly, so loitered through all its length, it was a long time before he contrived the meeting with the

young princess which was now the one thing for which he lived. For Angus had known, from the night when he walked away from Tlaya's hall past the little stone house at which he looked so longingly in the darkness, that the maid of his love lay there. And all his poet soul since that day had wrapped itself about the thought of her, so that the sweetness of the Summer and the far glory of the evening skies had spoken to him as they had never before.

But he was wary, for although Arnulf had not hesitated to hint at the troubles within Tlaya's kingdom, he had not told the story of the princess' birth to Angus; and the young chieftain, knowing that there was little hope of the Pictish Queen's sanction that he should wed the young princess, feared to let any of her people see him; therefore, many a day while Fedalm wandered, picking the wild flowers which she loved, he lay hidden in some rocky leafy knoll and watched her, and the flame of his love leaped so high within him that Seumas, watching his lean cheek and over-bright eyes, feared that his gifted young brother might be consumed of his passion before ever it could bring him joy.

But old Rula could have told the Silver Tongue that which would have cheered his heart, for she heard the artless prattle of Fedalm, who spoke many times a day of the courtesy and poetry of soul which must fill him who knew how to find the rarest blossoms—who loved the fair moon and the evening star and who esteemed women too highly to pay them mere compliments of the tongue. For Arnulf was a subtle lad and a clever, and he had contrived to make the girl see the young chieftain with his own youthfully ardent eyes; and this he did, although his own heart longed for the very thing which he was thus helping to pass away from him, for well he knew that he was of no estate to wed with the princess.

And old Rula, gravely listening and judiciously agreeing, would sometimes turn away her head that the girl might not see the tender smile in her eyes.

So, though Angus and Eric and Arnulf and the old nurse were all trying to bring about a meeting between the two, it came at last when none of them expected it.

Rula was sick that day, and Fedalm, after tending her, went abroad, taking with her only Arnulf. And on that day

Angus, sick at heart, and plunged into one of those moods of despair which but heighten the fever of love, took no heed as to his steps. And so he shot a heron and but grazed its wing, for his eyes were dimmed by longing. And so he followed the fluttering bird and its shrill, stricken cries until he came out above a little grassy, open place, and there he halted with wide eyes, looking at the beautiful picture which lay before him.

Fedalm, in the red and amber gown which so set off her pearly skin and the glory of her hair, knelt by the wounded thing and soothed it with her hand, and Arnulf wet a scarf in the little stream which bubbled near that she might wash its wound.

A long moment Angus stood, making no movement—hardly breathing in his wonder, for this was not the pale girl who had lain so wanly at his feet, but a radiant young maid of a beauty so great that she seemed not mortal. Yet, still as he stood, the burning of his eyes drew hers, so that she looked up and saw him, and a deep blush spread across her cheeks.

Then he came down, leaping from point to point so recklessly, and withal so gracefully that Fedalm caught her breath in admiration. And then he stood before her speechless for the moment, and as he looked at her tender care of the lovely bird he suddenly cast his arrows far into the herbage.

"I hunt no more in this moon, O Fedalm," he said, "having thus caused you pain by an arrow of mine."

If Angus had planned to win the favor of the girl by one speech he could not have chosen more wisely, but his words came from his heart. For while he loved the chase, as all fighting men must, he had also pity for defenseless things and love for the beauty of the birds of the air. And Fedalm, looking into his eyes, saw there that his words were true words, and her heart was warm and she gave the heron into the care of Arnulf, who carried it to a distance that it might not be frightened by hearing human voices, and also that the two might have speech together without a hearer.

But, of a truth, he might have remained, for naught was said which even Queen Tlaya might not have heard; that which none could have heard, and yet which

spoke far louder to their ears than the sound of their voices was what eye told to eye.

"Thou art the fairest maid I have ever looked upon, and my heart is burning for thee," said the blue eyes of the Silver Tongue.

"Thou art good to my sight, and thy glance sends my heart to beating like that of a frightened bird," confessed the lovely, dropped lids which partly hid and partly revealed the violets beneath them.

But what their lips said was but talk of the flowers that might be found thereabouts, and of the pleasant dales near at hand, and about the quaint fashion of the young chief's belt, of so ancient a make that no man knew its true age. And so, soon they parted, with such courteous and graceful salutations as their high rank had taught them; and Fedalm caused the heron to be released and went home to Rula, to whom she discoursed all that evening of anything save the young chief, and Rula smiled, well satisfied, for Arnulf had told her of the encounter in the glen.

If Fedalm and Angus had not been so lost in each other, as they met again and again in the same spot—each time professing the utmost surprise that so they should meet—they would have wondered how it was that never a herder happened to cross the little path which led down into it, that never a footfall save their own and old Rula's seemed to stir the lush grass.

But some of the Norsemen could have told, for when the princess wandered out to the glen there were always two or three who slipped out after her. Thus they kept watch at all the approaches to the glen, and, did a Pictish man chance to come near, they made some excuse to divert him from the place, and this so cautiously that no whisper of the plot was heard outside of those who carried it.

And under the warm Summer sun and the beam of young love Fedalm blossomed until Angus, fearing to try his fortune, yet found it harder and harder to hold his tongue against his love, and the girl, knowing in her inmost heart what was befalling her, but not acknowledging it to herself, would have been as happy as a carefree bird had it not been for the fear which lay daily on her, for the old priest grew bolder and bolder in his tutelage of her, and spoke more and more plainly

as to his wish for her initiation into the priestly office.

So she knew that the decisive time was near at hand, and while she trusted to her Norsemen to save her from that awful fate by a knife, if need be, yet to her beating, happy heart that seemed a cruel way in which to leave a world just opening its door of happiness to her.



SO IT was the clutching claw of Kapultep which at last united the lovers—the very thing which the old priest would have given an eye to prevent. For on a bright day when the girl met the young chieftain and old Rula went a pace from them to gather the herbs for her pot—for in truth she had rare skill in cookery—and while the gentle air fell sweetly upon them and swirled the long strands of Fedalm's hair across the breast of Angus—yet her cheek was pale and her eye was grave.

"What portends your mien, O Fedalm?" Angus asked quickly.

Now Fedalm and Rula had agreed, the night before, that the Silver Tongue should be told of the danger which menaced the girl, for, said Rula, it would be an advantage to the Norsemen had they a friend in the high, strong dun which was even then nearing completion. And of what else there might be an advantage the old woman said nothing.

So Fedalm lifted her eyes to Angus and told him all that concerned her, even to the truth as to her parentage; and Angus listened with a high heart, for that Fedalm trusted him, and also for that he saw that he would now be able to do battle for her.

"And what then, O Princess, is the plan of your men?" he asked, when she had made an end of her tale. "And where will they shelter you once they have rescued you from the priest—may the gods wreak their vengeance on him who dares to defile you with such treachery?"

"There is an old swineherd among the Norsemen who has a daughter somewhat resembling me—and he dwells far inland—on the very edge of Queen Tlaya's domain, and his heart is bitter against her, for she had his only son slain for some little fault. If my hair were shorn and I clad in humble garments it is thought that I might shelter there for a time, while his true daughter hides amongst her kinsfolk. For Eric

and his cousin are to steal away a small galley and return to my father's land where I have kinsmen who will send help to me."

Now the very thought of Fedalm sheltered in a place so ill suited to her beauty and her rank as a swineherd's hut filled the soul of Angus with shuddering, and he spoke quickly:

"O Princess, permit that your servant should have the honor of your presence when the time comes that you must flee the Druid and your most unnatural father's wife. My brother Seumas will welcome you to our dun, where we will build for you a house with all proper attendance. And you shall be safe, for your Norsemen will not attack us, and the Picts dare not. And we will make a pact with your Norsemen that we will help them to seat you on the throne of your father. What say, O fair Princess?"

Fedalm shook her head.

"I dare not accept such service from you, O Silver Tongue!" she exclaimed. "For it is not as if I sat in my chair of state now and could offer you and your brother a suitable alliance. It may be a long bloody time until I am secure, or I may lose my life, for the priest is evil and would rather kill me than that I should escape him, while even my father's wife would take my life, I think, were she sure that she could dispose of me in no other way. No, no, Angus MacDubha—but if you will confer with Eric as to the best plan it will be the act of friendship."

Now Angus looked down upon her ruddy head and knew that he could no longer keep silence before her.

"Will you not accept service from me, fair woman, and most dear?" he said.

"Will you not, when to render such service is all that life can give me of joy? All these many times have I carried within my heart the image of you, hoping against hope that I might win your sweet body and your sweet spirit for mine own. What say you, who art the princess of my spirit, as you are of this land?"

And as he spoke he whispered more and more, for he saw the color come rushing up fairly into Fedalm's tresses, and one glance she gave him before she put her face between her hands; and then Angus drew her within the circle of his arms and wound her long locks tightly around his neck.

"O fair and most fair," he said, into the small ear beneath the red strands, "thus do I bind me to you in a union which shall not be broken until death, nor after, if so will the gods of the Land of No Return."

And Fedalm wept against his broad breast, and stole her two arms about his neck, and forgot that she was a princess sore beset by danger, and was but a girl who loved.

VII



THE dun of the MacDubhas was a far finer piece of work than Queen Tlaya's fortress, for all that the Pictish stronghold had been in existence many years, for the men of MacDubha were skilled workmen, and there were some among them who were cunning artificers. Also, Angus knew how to so transplant the flowering hedges from the countryside as to have them grow as though they had never been moved—and so, as the young chieftain returned to his house, after leaving his betrothed to the care of her old nurse, he had many pleasant things to look upon and to enjoy, more than would have seemed possible in a dun but just erected upon a wild, unfriendly coast.

For the brothers had brought with them many tapestries, which were the handiwork of their mother, and many vessels and implements. Best of all, they had brought with them the graces of life, as much as were known in that age.

The evening meal was set in the hall when Angus reached his hearth, and many of the retainers sat at meat with Seumas, who turned to smile, as his young brother came to his place; and then Seumas arose and came to him and put an arm upon his shoulder, for the tale was written in the glowing face of Angus; and Seumas had known for long of what burned his brother's heart.

"Aye, it is even so, O my brother!" Angus said, looking up into the kind face above him. "And now will we have a home, indeed, for soon my bride comes to me."

"Aye, a home for my young gallant, but how about the unwedded one? Methinks there will be scant place for him with all this bridging," Seumas replied, teasing the boy with his grave jest.

"Nay, brother, speak not so, even though

merrily," Angus replied, earnestly, "though I fear that in all the world there is not such another maid for you. But it is not all on smooth waters that our galley will sail, for there is a dark story behind that fair girl," and he proceeded, to tell his brother Seumas the tale.

"Aye, indeed, a dark tale!" Seumas exclaimed, when Angus had done. "You were right; that Pictish woman is an evil one, and the priest no true follower of the gods. What say you? Shall we attack her fortress without delay and carry off the princess?"

"That may be, but listen to a thought of mine, brother," Angus answered. "If we attack it will be hard for the Norsemen who are loyal to Fedalm to escape and join us, and if they remain within the walls we are likely to injure some of them. Which I would not, for Fedalm's sake, nor for theirs, for they are true men. But Fedalm has arranged that she shall not be snatched away by the Druid—may the gods bring confusion on him—without warning.

"So, when she is taken away, let me follow and take her from the Druid. He is sure to have but a small escort, since it is likely that she will be taken away secretly. Thus, we will have the princess safe, for the Norsemen will find excuse for not attacking us, and we need not fight nor separate Fedalm's kingdom with inward quarrels, as we surely will if we force the Picts and the Norsemen to take sides against each other.

"Then, when the Norse kinsmen of the princess arrive she will put herself at their head, the Norsemen of Tlaya will join her and I, as her lord, will join my cause to hers—and Tlaya and her Druid will be exiled to their own fire tower, while the kingdom falls to my princess—a full kingdom, for the Picts have not the stomachs to fight an open fight, not even for their queen. They are well enough for a foray, or to steal upon a band of fighters by night—but otherwise——"

An eloquent outflinging of Angus' expressive hand spoke with but scanty respect for the Picts.

"By the gods, it is a well-laid plan!" exclaimed Seumas, looking curiously at his brother. "In truth, Angus, I never gave you thought as being so much of a crafty chieftain."

"They who are inspired by love are wise," Angus said, quoting an old Norse saying. "I would not be so lost in joy as to fail in care for the honor and place of Fedalm's kingdom."

Now behind the two brothers, as they talked, the old bard of their family had been standing, and he had not moved away as he saw that they conferred together, for he was as their father in love. Moreover, those who sat at the board with the MacDubhas had heard somewhat of the speech of Angus, for the clan was closely united to its chiefs in confidence and trust.

And Muirdach, Leary's son, the foster-brother of Seumas, suddenly raised his cup and cried a blessing upon Angus and his love, and all those within the hall did the same, so that for the rest of the meal there was much pleasant and happy talk. Those who were the chief builders planned to hasten with the making of a suitable house for Fedalm, at the sunniest corner of the high lawn, and one, an old, old man with cunning hands, promised Angus that he should have the fittings of the bride's house of as fine a design as his skill could make.

So the time went until the evening shadows fell, and the two brothers went to sit on the bench outside the door, for always they loved that quiet hour; and the bard and his harper came to play, and many of the clan lay about, at their feet, all as they were wont to do. But on that night the song the bard sang was one which none of them had ever heard, and as he sang he fixed his sunken eyes upon the two men whom he loved as he did not love his own sons.



FIRST there came the long, wailing chords which the harper struck from his instrument; and then the old man's voice, still honey sweet, and skilled, as one who had learned his art from the ancient masters:

"A chief, following Deya's sons, with Conree out of Uladh—driven by Rury's savage horde—had built his stronghold in the Western Isles, when to the land again he led his host to carry vengeance to an evil throng sprung in the South—red foreigners, who levied toll on every countryside wherein they came; such toll as none so dire had been since the dread progeny of Cichol—he of the wasted feet—laid claws on Nemed's children.

"Country folk they chained as serfs and drove like beasts to toil, hostages in thirst and famine held, and these they burned before their kinsmen's

walls. Kings' daughters took they in their bud and the young queens like cattle forage for their lustful chief. These parceled they again among themselves after his pleasure of them; then sent them naked forth to seek their kin, whereat they died of shame. Out of ten cantreds the fair girls thus spoiled they. Red Sweynie was the hated chieftain's name.

"And it is a bond upon old Ferna in this hour that it be said, that it be sung, before the men of Dubha, in what wise was their lord, bold Dubha of the Rock, aroused to wrath against that chieftain, Sweynie and his brood."

The brothers exchanged startled glances when they heard their father's name suddenly brought into what they had thought but some *scala* of ancient days. And there were many significant glances among the older men, who knew what was coming and stirred, like lions who smell the blood of a deferred feast.

The bard, as if he knew what interest he had aroused, waited, looking afar at the evening sky, while his harper pulled long, low chords from the strings which foretold some direful tale.

And, then, seeing that all were still again, he went on:

"Fairer than any maid was Dubha's only daughter; white as the hawthorne bloom her skin; the scarlet berries of Dubhross no redder than her lips; black as the sky of night her hair, and all the arts of a king's child she had—embroidery and song, and gracious, witty speech.

"One day at dusk, the maiden wandered on the strand with wilful feet, afar from those that guarded her, who, when they sought her with affrighted cries, found but her brodered scarf and one small shoe. So, with lament they said, the spirits of the sea to their abode beneath the waves had wrapped her.

"The hall of Dubha of the Rock with great mourning was filled that night, when in weeping and in wailing the messengers related the woful news.

"But not too greatly dared bold Dubha grieve, nor dared his pious lady, lest bright Manannan, great Sea King, take offense, who on their child had set his choice, had set his seal.

"So hid they their sorrow, and at dusk upon the shore laid they their gifts, that Manannan should know their piety, should know they bore his will.

"Nine times the moon had circled since the fair maid vanished, but, as the ninth passed, wanly, there rocked upon the waves a little boat, a shell upon the tide by Dubha's isle. None saw its coming till, at that final dawn, when the thin moon takes leave of earth a while, an early fisher cried aloud upon the gods at sight of it and of the freight it bore. What but a pallid spirit lay therein, as a flower dying, beauteous, a being dumb, naked and woful-eyed; a naked, stark babe there pressing blue lips upon the famished bosom of her. At his cry upstressed the maid her heavy hair about her as a cloak, and she moaned the Dubha's name as father, and she moaned his lady's name as mother.

"Trembling in a fright, the fisherman would have lifted her, would have saved her. He cast his cloak upon her and he saw the double crime, her little ankles bound with chains upon the hoops which stretched the deerhide of the feeble bark.

"Swift as the fisher bore his news upward to Dubha's dun, more swift came Dubha downward to the strand, while followed him his lady and her train. With a wild lament before that sight they stood, and not with less lament but with a mighty curse did Dubha bend above his long-lost child.

"Who did this thing?" was the curse and the cry that Dubha sent out in frenzy and in fury. With her last breath answered the girl, and the name that was upon her lips that time few heard; Leary, the father of Muirdach, heard, and I, Ferna, the bard, who say to you and who sing to you the poem of Dubha's daughter as none else until now has said it.

"When the pale spirit of the girl had passed there rose from out the waves a host of seals and through a mist that fell upon the shore they thronged; the maiden's boat they took, they bore it and they took it away, her and the dead babe, while none dared stay them. Some say King Manannan was in their midst, but none could see for true for the bright trail of mist on the sea wave.

"And for a consolation and for a healing to the Dubha and to his lady and the kindred of the maid, out of the sea whispered songs, rose songs, about Dubha's Rock all day.

"Now Dubha rested neither day nor night till all his galleys were renewed in strength. To the top height of his great masts the sails were hoisted on the ships of Dubha; sails shining in the sun, speckled with red and white. On nine galleys hoisted they the sails, and thrice nine oars each galley bore, and thrice fifty men, within, to fight. So turned they their prows to the sea and their sterns to the shore, and they left no rope without breaking, nor chain without rending, that no moorings should hold them to the land.

"But the red wind of March came before the face of the galleys, and the red wind of March beat about the galleys; such a wind as none had ever known before, so that of all the galleys but few were saved; and that one which bore the Dubha was swept beneath the waves. Then returned those who were able to the Rock of Dubha, knowing not where to look for that one on whom vengeance should have fallen; and I, who tell the tale of Dubha's daughter, and Leary, the father of Muirdach, said not the name, though we knew it, for the Clanna Dubha was weak, and its fighting men were gone to the kingdom of Manannan.

"And on Dubha's Rock there remained that sad lady who had lost a lord and fair daughter within twelve circles of the moon; but also there remained two boys, whose arms should one day bear their father's shield; aye, who should one day avenge their father and their wronged sister; aye, and who should in time, again raise the war-cry of the Dubha."

Well had Ferna, the old bard, timed the ending of his tale, for as his high, piercing voice carried the last note he was answered by a thunderous shout from those around, who sprang to their feet, crying the cry of the clan:

"Aicil Dubh na Creig! Aicil Dubh na Creig!" (For the dark Eagle of the Rock!)

VIII



WHEN the shrill war-cry died away the two brothers put their hands upon the shoulders of Ferna, the old bard.

"Why were we not told of this before?" Seumas asked. "When we battled with Red Sweynie in our homeland, and with our brother chiefs were beaten by his hordes, think you not we would have prevailed had we known of this outrage to our sister? How comes it that the tale has been so hidden? In truth, I thought that our sister died when we were all little together."

"You were too young to remember," Ferna said, "and it was the command of your mother that you be not told until the youngest of you should be come to manhood. Even as she lay dying, in that year before we fled the Northland, she repeated her commands, and faithfully have we—the few who knew the story—kept to our word. But now the time has come. Both of you are fighting men, and Silver Tongue, for all his joy of youth, is no less fitted than you, O MacDubha, to bear arms against the despoiler of your sister.

"And also the time will soon come when you shall see this red fiend beaten to the dust, though mayhap not without great stress of battle. For he is no longer young, and when the galleys of your kinsmen come to bring you news, as they have promised, you will hear, methinks, that more and many chiefs have united against him. Until that time there is space for bridging, O Angus!"

"In truth, Ferna, my heart burns all the keener against Red Sweynie, in that I have learned how fair is a maid, and how without price her untouched sweetness. Alas, that our sister should have known so cruel a fate—" and there Angus broke off, and went to pace moodily at a far spot on the high lawn, thinking upon that fair girl so shorn of life and honor.

The men who watched him and who knew his tender heart thought none the less of him that the tears had come to his bright eyes.

And while the torches in the hall were lit, and the bard went within, for his old limbs

were quick to feel the chill of evening, the MacDubha and his men remained talking amongst themselves, and Muirdach said to Seumas that he would clasp hands again in brotherhood upon the blood feud—and while Angus continued to walk apart, his poet soul torn by pity for that sweet one of his blood, there came a challenge from the gate and a runner sprang from before the door and sped to the cry of the warder who guarded it. Then some of the men ran, leaping, to the hall of weapons and snatched therefrom their swords or javelins, but ere they returned they heard the call of Seumas:

"Peace! 'Tis a friend."

Arnulf had already paid several visits at night to the dun of the MacDubhas, so that Seumas was not surprised as he saw the runner returning with him, but Angus, perceiving from where he stood who it was that had come—for the torch the runner had brought back from the gate showed the face clearly—Angus leaped forward, with fear upon him, driven by the prescience of those who love.

And as the youth saw Angus he sprang toward him and there was no need for a question, for his eyes were wide and his face was dark.

"'Tis even so, O Angus!" he exclaimed.

"When—when—tonight? Speak, man!"

"Aye, tonight, but not until the waning of the moon."

"Aye—at midnight." Angus glanced quickly upward. "Then come into the hall and tell your tale."

"See that you all sleep somewhat," Seumas ordered his men, "for a night's work is before some of you. And you, Muirdach, see you to the walls. The gods alone know what evil plans are afoot," and then he followed his brother and the messenger within the hall.

"First and the chief thing about the princess," Arnulf began. "After meat this night Fedalm was sent for to the hall. And because of other events, which I will tell, Eric and Rula, aye, and many of our blood were troubled. So I slipped into the hall in the disguise I have told you of, but I could not get too close to the great chairs because of the torches set 'round about them. And after Kapultep and the Dark One and Fedalm came within none were admitted, so that I lurked afar amongst the dogs who searched, as is their

custom, for bones and scraps beneath the table.

"At that distance I could hear only the voices of the three, and not a word of their speech, but I could see, and if ever the cursed Druid and the Dark One were bent upon evil, concealed with smiling faces, it was then.

"Our princess showed not fear, nor confusion; she seemed to be gravely considering, and at last she gave assent to something whereat the Dark One enfolded her in those treacherous arms and pinned upon her bosom a great brooch—such a brooch, O Angus, as I have never seen before, bright with many jewels and its pin as long as a dagger.

"'Tis doubtless the work of Kapultep, who is the most cunning of artificers in such ware. Thrice three days has he been down upon the Island of the Mystic Shield where also went the queen toward midday."

"'Tis a fair island," Seumas interrupted, "and I marvel not that the queen threatened a fight should we trespass upon it. 'Tis her sacred place of altars, then?"

"Aye, Seumas, and her place of torture. Her folk are forbidden to approach it, though the queen and the Druid and some of her favored Picts are sometimes there for long together, and it is rumored that there the Dark One holds such orgies as the dark gods smile upon. But sure it is that in the caves of the underground chambers with which the isle is underlaid, those who have felt her displeasure have died by famine and thirst.

"Moreover, the Dark One goes there always before any new thing, therefore were the Norsemen prepared for some trouble when they thus saw her go. No doubt it was to see the brooch which Kapultep has made and into which he has poured his black magic. 'Tis that which causes us all fear lest the magic of it should steal upon the princess."

"Fear you not," Angus answered quickly, "there is no magic which can touch her pure spirit. Moreover, she must have given you the warning, else——"

"Aye, so did she!" the boy exclaimed, his face lighting. "After the brooch was pinned upon her she sat a while, then made salutation and made as if to pass outward, but the Druid restrained her and pointed to where a great pile of skins was heaped. And then there came from behind the

great chair one of the virgins of the fire tower who took the princess by the hand and led her to that couch and gave her attendance.

"Fedalm smiled as if well pleased, and I saw the Druid and the Dark One look at each other with satisfaction; and then they sank back in their chairs as if they meant to stay the night there; as, in truth, they did.

"Now Fedalm sank down and seemed to sleep lightly, and then she aroused herself, saying that she could not sleep, and went to walk at the far end of the hall. I wondered much whether she planned to escape, but I knew that she could not, for there was no other way out save the great door, and that was securely fastened; moreover, the Druid and the queen kept their eyes close upon her.

"Had I thought it possible I would have sprung out and attempted to win through with the princess, for I count my poor life as nothing against hers, but I would have no time to open the door, I knew, before the old priest and the Dark One would be upon me. One I might have overcome alone, but the queen is of the strength of a man, and I dared not risk it, since did I fail there would be none to carry the word."

He looked anxiously at the two brothers, for he feared that they would think he had not done all he could.

"'Tis well, 'tis well!" Angus commended him.



"SO I crept along beneath the table on my belly, sniffing and growling as the other dogs did, until I could look up into the face of our princess; and as I did so, I slipped aside the dog's head somewhat and she saw me, but she made no sign. With her hands clasped behind her and her wonder hair floating about her, she continued to pace, and I saw that she smiled to herself, and then she began to hum a little as if she were happy. Aye, MacDubhas, you should have seen the Dark One's face and the face of the Druid then!

"The one believed that her ears played her false, and the other, the dried, shriveled old mummy, smirked as though he were young and a maid called his name. Up and down the princess came and went, each time walking a little farther away

from the great chairs, and each time I crawled to that farther point and finally I began to hear the air that so many have listened for so long."

"Oh, 'tis a cunning maid!" Angus said, flushing with pride of her. "And a high heart carries she. Right worthy is she of the allegiance of true men!"

"Most worthy!" Arnulf replied, and ere he looked down something there flashed in his eye which Angus read aright.

Not without harm to the heart of the boy had been Fedalm's beauty and her graciousness. Angus touched the shoulder nearest him with a kind hand.

"And most worthy of her trust are you, lad," he said.

"May the gods grant it!" the other answered, and he lifted his eyes and looked straightly at Angus, for he knew that the eyes of the lover had discovered his secret. "And I believe that our princess believes it. For she approached the table as she sang and half-leaned upon it, as if in a revery, saying the words of the song—and in the midst of them she said: 'At midnight, but what path I know not,' and so did she prolong the notes that only one as near as I could have understood that she did ought but hum."

"But how got you away, lad?" demanded Seumas. "This can have been but a brief time."

"By a trick, O Seumas," answered the youth. "When Fedalm went back to her skins and seemed to fall asleep, I wondered much how I might get the great door open but a little. And at last I began stealing the bones from the dogs, which caused them to snarl and growl and to so disturb the quiet of the hall that the queen said they must be put out."

"As soon as she spoke those words I stirred up first one dog and then another by pinching them lightly on their flanks, so that they broke into cries. And then I got as near the door as I could, in a dark corner, and waited for the rush they would make when the door was opened by Kapultep. The old Druid is a coward as to his own hide, as are all plotters in darkness, and that I knew; he fears the dogs, who like him not, and show their teeth at him, so that he was fearful as he swung the door open, and saw me not as I ran with the other dogs into the night."

"And as soon as I had warned Eric I ran

here. As the betrothed of our princess Eric said that it was your right to order what should be done. For Fedalm told us three when she returned from the glen today and gave us leave that her Norsemen should know somewhat of her happiness."

"First, tell us what were those events which caused you uneasiness today?" Seumas asked.

That was ever the way of the elder MacDubha. His mind was not so keen as his young brother's, but it overlooked no point.

"Strange events indeed, O Seumas," the youth replied. "While the Dark One and the Druid were on the Island of the Mystic Shield the watchers on the walls saw strange galleys in the bay."

"What!" the MacDubhas exclaimed together.

"How comes it that our watchers saw them not?" Seumas' brow was knit.

"They came in back of the island, O Seumas, which inlet can not be seen from your headland. You must post watchers on the bluff head beyond your walls if you wish to keep guard of both inlets. But our walls, being more to the left, command the one and the other. So we saw the galleys, much sea-worn, come through the inlet. Now the queen's small barge lay on that side of the island, and soon it put out with the queen's flag at the masthead, by which we knew that she went to meet the strangers. No coward is that Pictish Tlaya as is Kapultep. And as to what then occurred this it is, as one of her rowers, a Norseman, told it to Eric."

"The queen met the foremost galley, which was commanded by a giant Viking, and she cried to him that these were her waters, and that he should pay her homage before entering them. The Viking smiled, said the Norseman, but he came on board the barge. A sea rover is he, according to his tale, who has need to rest upon land for a time, since some of his men are sick; also, his galleys need refitting, having been much damaged by encounters with hostile craft. And if the queen has a wily tongue so has he, for in the end she agreed that he should have an arm of the inland bay, which is beyond our fortress, in which to anchor his galleys, and that he should have a place on the bluff beyond for a fortified camp for the remainder of the Summer."

"The queen made it a point, said the Norseman who reported this, that the rover was not to allow his men meetings with hers since conflict might result from such. But well we know that it is because she fears the newcomers will unite with her Norsemen that she so forbade.

"But of that there is small danger, for our kinsman reports that the sea rover has an evil cast of countenance and that his men bear themselves with rudeness and lack of courtesy; belike he is one who has no home place in our land—for there are such outlawed for their crimes. But the coming of this chief was, we think, the reason for this sudden concluding of the plans of Kapultep and the Dark One, for doubtless the queen fears that the presence of these strangers of our own blood will give us courage to demand that Fedalm be seated on the throne; therefore is our princess to be hastened away where even the impious would hesitate to force themselves—and doubtless the Dark One will proclaim that it was by Fedalm's own wish that she goes to be the priestess of the tower, since she has not shunned the priest, according to the plan laid by Eric.

"Thus it is, O MacDubhas, that the affair lies. The stranger's galleys lie in the inlet beyond our fortress; Eric goes among our people to warn them to be in readiness for whatever you may agree upon as our chief by marriage; the Picts suspect nothing, Kapultep and the queen keep vigil in the hall, and the princess lies among them. Doubtless her escort into the land will be of the Picts, and they will be called just before the setting out. So is my tale truly given."

"And well is Fedalm's trust in you justified," said Angus warmly. "Now to plan. What say you, Seumas? Shall we do as we thought on? Shall I take a strong hosting and steal Fedalm away? Tlaya will not suspect that there will be any such plan, for she believes that none have been within sound of Fedalm's voice since the decision was announced to her. And doubtless Fedalm, true to our agreement, has pretended to be pleased with her future as priestess."

"It is a good plan, brother," Seumas answered. "Our dun is strong and can resist any attack made on it, though I doubt that Tlaya will attempt that. Then, with the coming of Fedalm's kinsmen and

with the help of her Norsemen who are now supposed to be Tlaya's subjects, we will give the throne to the rightful one."

"I am glad that you agree," Angus replied, as he arose to escort Eric's cousin to the gate whence he would slip across country to the Pictish fortress, and then, as an afterthought, he made careless inquiry—

"Heard you the name of the stranger chief?"

"Aye," replied the youth. "He is known as Red Sweynic."

IX

 THE great fire tower in the hills was far in the interior, to the east of the Pictish fortress. There was no road which led to it, but a great diversity of paths, wandering here and there over the countryside, which converged when near the tower into the broad, well-kept environs of the sacred place. But within a dozen miles of Tlaya's fortress there were really only two paths along which a number of persons could comfortably travel.

Some of the Norsemen would have been assigned the task of guiding Angus' party, and uneasiness ran all through them, during that night, that it had not been done; but Angus had decided that the absence of any one of them would surely point to a plot on the part of all those of his people; and it was agreed on that only in the event of the rescuing party missing the princess entirely would one of the MacDubhas be sent in the morning to a prearranged spot outside Tlaya's walls, where the least conspicuous youth of the Norsemen in the queen's domain would be waiting to guide Angus along the winding paths to the tower.

For Angus was sure that he would not miss Fedalm, having explored all the paths a number of times himself; still, to be sure, the young Norseman would wait as has been said.

And that there might be no mischance, two of Angus' men were sent to watch the farther path, though it did not seem likely that it would be chosen, being too narrow for the chariots.

So, as the moon dipped lower and lower, part of the great gate of Tlaya's stronghold opened and a procession issued forth. Trembling, and with difficulty controlling the sobs which choked her, Fedalm let

herself be lifted on the cushioned skins stretched between her bearers' shoulders, nor could she answer the exultant, low-toned exclamation of Kapultep, who put his hand in a proprietary manner upon her arm and all but embraced her as she settled in her unsteady perch.

Now that she was started on her perilous journey the girl began to feel the fear which her naturally high courage had fought off before, while she was still inside the familiar walls of her home. But now that she had left it forever—for whether she were rescued by Angus, or were carried to the tower and there saved herself from the Druid with the small, keen knife which Eric had given her, it was sure that all the peaceful, happy days of her childhood were gone and that the Pictish stronghold, so associated with the loved memories of her father, would not see her more, unless after much battle.

In addition to all her other fears and terrors, the still, dark night affrighted the girl, who had never been outside the walls after sundown. The party carried no torches and made hardly a sound, for the chariots in which they would continue the journey, after they had passed through the groves and rocky bluffs surrounding the fortress, were waiting for them farther on.

Fedalm could have wept aloud, like a child, but instead, she controlled herself, cleared her eyes and kept a steady watch upon the stars. Only in that way could she tell which path they were taking. And as she watched, consternation filled her, for she saw that instead of taking either of the two paths which led away from her home, they were forcing their way through a mere thread of a footpath, worn by such as went out to the wild land to herd the queen's cattle.

Fedalm's head spun. What to do now? It was a sure thing that Angus would miss the party at this rate, for there was little sound to guide him to it, even were he near; and the two paths which he would watch were far enough away so that even the noise of an ordinary, careless procession of people would not reach him; much less these stealthy footers, who seemed not to breathe. Fedalm thought of suddenly sending out her voice in a great cry, trusting to Angus to hear it, but her knowledge of every foot of the ground over which she was traveling told her that that would be worse than useless.

The undergrowth thereabouts was so thick that it would be impossible for any one to cut across it from either of the other paths. In desperation, the girl peered about at her escort and satisfied herself by their low stature that they were all Pictish men. No use, whatever, to appeal to any of them, for they were, to a man, in deadly fear of the Druid.

Far in advance Kapultep walked, but the line of the escort was strung out behind her so that it would be impossible to put into effect the idea which, for one mad instant, she had—that of flinging herself from her carriers' shoulders and trusting to her quickness to help her to steal away in the darkness.

The steady, rapid rate at which she was being carried terrified Fedalm. Whatever happened, she must have a little time to think. So she leaned back, as if she were faint, and then, when the carriers looked up at her, appraised of her odd change of position by her shifting weight, she asked faintly for water.

"This swaying motion on your shoulders, my good men, gives me a sickness," she said. "Set me down for a pace until I recover myself."

The path was so narrow that it would have been difficult and tedious for Kapultep to go back to where the princess' carriers were setting her on the ground, but as the long line halted, he called cautiously back to know what was the matter.

"'Tis naught, O Kapultep," Fedalm hastened to answer, "save that the motion of the men beneath me has made me dizzy, for a moment. Is there water here? I would drink and refresh me."

This desire for water was partly true, but also, it was in Fedalm's mind that she might risk one appeal to the man who brought it to her, for her carriers had stepped somewhat away from her, as respect demanded, and it would be possible to speak without being entirely overheard. So as a man from behind began working his way forward, and she dimly perceived that he carried a skin of water, she made up her mind to beg his help, even though it instantly were refused.

But as the man came up to her and leaned to pour her drink into the carved horn cup which she wore, attached to her girdle, he looked directly into her face and she hardly concealed the start that he gave her,

for it was the old swineherd, at whose hut she had planned at first to hide from Kapultep. But if he had not thrust his face so close she would never have known him, for he had colored his reddish hair streaked with gray, with soot and darkened his fair skin with the same disguise; and as he was of an exceptionally low stature, he might easily enough have passed for a Pict, in the darkness. However it had been done, Fedalm knew that he was sent to be her help, and her spirits rose with a bound.

"Thank the gods!" she said aloud, as if she were overcome with faintness. "Pour a little on my wrists, as well, that I may be revived."

And then, as he did so, taking pains to bend his head near her mouth, she whispered:

"Slip out and find the MacDubha, who waits on one or both of the paths. Say that he must catch up with me where the chariots wait." And then, aloud, "'Tis well. Let me rest but a moment and we will go on."

"Is all well, O Princess?" Kapultep called back softly, and in the darkness Fedalm shuddered, for his voice dripped with the evil lust of his heart, but she answered him, keeping her tones kind and strong, that the faintness was but momentary.

Then she rested as long as she dared, fearing every moment to hear some outcry in the rear, which would tell that the old swineherd had been missed, also, thinking that the longer she delayed, the better chance would there be for Angus to reach the appointed place ahead of Kapultep.

But she dared not prolong the wait too much, lest Kapultep's suspicions be aroused, so she was soon in her seat again.

It was slower going in the narrow path than it would have been on the broad ones, so it was quite a while before they began to come out on the grove beyond which the chariots lay, and Fedalm began to have hope that Angus might be near. However, it was apparent that the old priest was not wholly without a thought that some attempt at interference with his plans might be near at this place, for he beckoned two men to him, as they all halted in a compact group, now in a little grassy spot at the end of the path.

"Go you ahead," he commanded. "Skirt

the trees and see that the chariots await us. Bend low among the rocks between the trees and bushes. 'Tis no time to risk aught, when we carry so great a treasure," and he turned to smirk up at the girl. "How fares the priestess?" he asked, in unctuous tones. "Soon to be the gods'—and Kapultep's."



FEDALM wondered, as she made him a pleasant reply, at the steadiness of her own voice, for her heart was beating suffocatingly. Surely—surely, there were lights beyond there among the trees. And then, just a moment before the priest did, she saw the two men who had been sent forward creeping and stumbling back and making cautious but agitated gestures.

"By the gods!" Kapultep exclaimed, catching sight of the two, and taking a step or two backward.

Even in the midst of her tensed peering forward toward all that the lights might mean, Fedalm smiled scornfully at Kapultep's cowardice. Then the two returning men dashed up to the priest.

"Beyond—beyond!" they whispered. "See, lights—warriors—a hosting!"

His shaking hand at his lip, Kapultep hesitated, and the little Picts huddled close. Fedalm could see their eyes faintly in the dim light which was beginning to steal over the sky, for they had been long in the coming, and the early morning of Midsummer was not so far away. And now there were sounds to hear as well as lights to see; low calls, footfalls, the clang of weapons as they brushed against the trees or against other weapons. Suddenly all the space between the trees opposite the priest's party was filled with the figures of giant men.

At least half of the Pictish men in the escort instantly took to flight, throwing themselves upon the ground and wriggling away through the thick, impervious underbrush. Those who remained surrounded Fedalm and the priest and began to push backward.

"Quick, Fedalm!" whispered Kapultep. "They have not seen us. We——"

At that moment the wily priest received the surprise of his whole lifetime, for the slim young girl whom he thought entirely under his subjection, and of whose strength, hid in her beauty, he had no idea, suddenly struck a fierce blow at his face with her

open hand. And, in the same instant, she pushed away some of the Picts, tripped another with her small foot and sprang out into the clearing where the hosting now was, still unconscious of their proximity to another party.

So that, great warriors as they were, and accustomed to all sorts of surprises, they were simply paralyzed by the apparition which suddenly came out upon them from the silent trees; a spirit, they thought her for a moment, with her flashing robes, her jeweled girdle, her white, beautiful face and the mass of flying hair which enclouded her.

Fedalm, too excited to see clearly, ran straight to the nearest man and clutched his arm.

"Thank the gods that you have come!" she exclaimed. "I feared that you would be too late."

Then, up beside the torch-bearer, whose arm she shook, there strode a huge, brawny man with fierce, light eyes, and a mane of glistening, bronze-red hair.

"By Thor's hammer, what is this?" he shouted.

Fedalm's eyes dilated with dismay. This giant was none of Angus' men. Moreover, now that she swept a glance upon the circle of men who still stood, agape, around her, she was sure that they wore a totally different garb. Her look sped wildly among them, while her thoughts raced. Did she really know much of the MacDubha? Might this not be some members of it whom Angus had sent—and yet, this leader had spoken in the Norse tongue, which only Seumas and his brother, among their clan, could speak.

That tongue, beloved more than ever since she had known that it was her mother's as well as her father's, gave her confidence. It might be that some one of the MacDubhas knew it, beside the two brothers.

"Are you from Seumas?" she asked. "And has aught happened to Angus?"

The man scowled as she spoke, but immediately his brow cleared as she looked up into his face, for no man could look on Fedalm and have it otherwise.

"I know not those names," he said.

Fedalm's heart sank and terror laid hold on her.

"Are you not men of the MacDubhas?" she inquired.

"Of the MacDubhas!" the giant repeated.

"Of—by the gods, that is a rare jest. I!" And he laughed, and an echo of his laughter ran among his men.

Fedalm's eyes flashed, for she liked not the disrespectful sound of it.

"Methinks you would laugh more softly were any of them here," she retorted.

"Where are they—near?" the big man asked, a strange expression in his eyes. "Methought they were—" and there he broke off suddenly, as if he put a check upon his tongue.

Instantly Fedalm veiled the anger and fear in her face, warned that there might be something here which she did not understand.

"I know not where they are now, since they are not here," she answered, more composedly, "they were to meet me near this place, to rescue me from—" involuntarily she looked back, shuddering, but she saw no movement in the clump of trees from which she had come.

"If you await rescue, it seems that it is to me that the gods have given the luck to bring it," he replied and laid a great hand with no ungentle touch, on her shoulder. "Who pursues you? And how comes one of your rank abroad, alone, at such an hour?"

Fedalm looked around the circle of faces, lit by the smoking torches. Norsemen, undoubtedly, they were, though not so well favored as her own. And then she turned her beautiful eyes to the great head above her. Unconsciously, she opened the door of her pure and noble spirit to the wondering gaze of those hard, light eyes gazing so piercingly at her, and something very different from what any woman had ever seen in them before slowly crept into them. And suddenly the girl determined to trust this man of her father's people.

Something had doubtless happened to delay Angus. When he did arrive, he would, it seemed likely, fraternize with these Norsemen, as he had with hers. So, briefly, she told the stranger exactly what had happened to her, but she did not say much of her stepmother, nor reveal the fact that she was not her real mother. She put all the blame upon the evil old priest.

"Angus would have rescued me—that was the plan," she ended up, "for he is my betrothed."

Something in the giant's eyes changed at that. It frightened Fedalm, but she was

too little skilled in the eyes of men to know what it portended.

"Where is this priest and his train?" he asked after a moment, in which Fedalm had the curious sense that he beat down some strong emotion, although he stood so still.

"They were there," she said pointing, "though it is likely that they have fled away now, as the priest and the escort are cowards."

"What is your will, O royal maid?" the man asked again after a silence. "Will you trust yourself to me? It seems not worth while for my men to follow these men who are not fighters, and this old priest. Will you come with me, or shall I return you to your mother?"

Fedalm looked steadily into his eyes and shook her head. Even though it were betraying her stepmother's cruelty to this stranger, she must make it plain that she would need protection against her, too.

"No, I may not return," she said.

She had hoped that these strangers would take her to the dun of the Mac-Dubhas, but she dared not ask that now, after the odd way in which their name had been received. But on the other hand, she dared not be left to wander about the shelterless country, even had these men been willing to let her go.

"I have no choice but to put my trust in you," she said.

Again his eyes changed—and even unskilled Fedalm knew that she had touched him.

"May the gods help me to keep it," he said simply.

Then he called two sturdy fellows, put his great shield upon their shoulders, laid his thick cloak upon it for a cushion and with one easy swing of his great arms he lifted the girl and placed her there.

"Be at ease, O 'royal maid," he said, "for Sweynie the Red and all his men shall cut down any who venture to molest you."

X



THE old swineherd had succeeded in dropping out of the path for the simple reason that his place was on the very end of the line of escort; and it was there because he had taken it after the party had passed through the great gate. The Picts who had been silently summoned to be Fedalm's guardians had been of the

queen's own household; men accustomed to many midnight excursions, for Tlaya sometimes chose to leave for her island at untoward hours and therefore they had not been surprised by the sudden call to duty.

But they had assembled so quickly and passed out of the hall, where the queen confided the princess to their care so swiftly, that they had not been really sure of their own numbers, so that when the last man saw a water-carrier behind him, whose stature was no greater than his own and whose skin was dark, he gave no thought to it.

Eric had planned well; for of all the Norsemen in Tlaya's domain, there was not one whose height would not have betrayed him, save this one old man, an exception to his race. And besides being so well-fitted for the deception, he was also an ideal man for the work in hand, since he knew the country as his own hand. The plan was that he should keep with the party until daylight and then, should Angus have, by any misfortune, failed to find it, he was to wait at a prearranged place to say how far beyond the princess was when the Mac-Dubhas did come up.

Between this precaution and that providing for a Norse guide for Angus in the morning hours, Eric thought that all emergencies and contingencies had been provided for.

But when the old man burst from a low thicket, beside the first path where Angus was keeping guard there was an immediate need for a new plan. Hastily, the Mac-Dubhas were called together and counsel taken.

"If you will deign to listen to me, my masters," the swineherd interposed, "I have a plan which I think good."

"Speak then," Angus replied, "for your faithfulness and age command respect."

"It is this, then. Just beyond where this little bypath, through which the priest and the Picts are taking our princess, there are groves set among rocks, and beyond that again is the open space where the chariots wait. There can be but few men with them, for they were taken out of the fortress early, just after the queen returned from the island, leaving by the opening in the walls on the landward side, so that their passing would have been little noted, since they were, apparently, for the conveying

away of the fire virgin who has been within the walls for several days.

"Do you take your men very quickly to that place where they wait, where there is good ambush in thick bushes at one side. Those who hold them in readiness can be easily overcome and their mouths stopped with cloth for they are Picts." He stopped there to spit, as many of the elder Norsemen always did when they spoke of the cowardly, treacherous little race. "Then, when the priest comes, suspecting nothing, let him be taken and may the gods show you, my masters, how to deal with such as he—and it will be an easy matter, in such a clear space for you to swing your swords and put the escort to flight."

"'Tis a good plan!" Angus exclaimed, and the rest agreed. So, as swiftly as they could, making haste, that they might be in the place where the chariots waited before Kapultep reached there, Angus and his men went on, and in due time, skirting the little glade where the path down which the girl was coming opened out, they passed into the opposite trees and so through them to the beginning of the wide path for chariots, which began on the other side.

Tlaya's chariots, two in number, destined for the use of Kapultep and the princess—for the journey to the fire tower was a long one—were guarded by four Picts—not even fighting men. The others, who had left with them, had gone on with the third chariot which contained the virgin, who was hastily returning, that all preparations for the great ceremony of initiation for the coming priestess might be set in order.

Leaving the fortress as they did from the rear of its walls, the chariots had bumped across the rough uplands at that point until, cutting straight across country, they had struck into the wide chariot road which ran along the foot of the ravine back of the MacDubha dun and then turned inland; and this had been a long, hot journey, so that the four who now awaited the coming of Kapultep were weary, and while three slept, only one kept guard.

It was the matter of but a moment for the one to be silenced, but in that moment the others awoke and while they were no fighting men, they knew the anger of Queen Tlaya well, and terror of her drove them to put up some resistance.

The conflict took only a moment, but

there was the matter of tying their mouths, that they might not make an outcry, and of fastening them securely to trees, that they might not escape in whatever sort of fight the escort of the princess might give, so that it was really longer than Angus realized when he and his men turned and made such disposition of themselves among the thick bushes as would hide them until they chose to appear.

"Do not be hasty in running out," Angus cautioned his men, "for I would not have the priest have a moment in which to have her bearers run with Fedalm; or, perchance, to stab her to death, for both he and the Dark One would attempt even that, methinks, to prevent her from falling into my hands."

So they all crouched among the bushes, waiting. The morning was coming on apace, now, although it was still gray and misty and Angus, from behind his shield of leaves, strained his eyes, thinking every moment that he saw that for which he longed. But he knew that he would not see those who would come until they were almost upon the chariots, for the screen of trees was thick. Nevertheless, he grew more and more uneasy as the moments went by.

"What think you?" he whispered to the old swineherd, who crouched near him. "Is't not long?"

"Nay," the other answered, "doubtless the princess has continued to feign sickness and thus delays the priest, knowing that time is the one needful thing."

"Aye—so," Angus muttered, but he continued to peer out so that it was he who finally caught a glimpse of lights moving in the open space from which the procession was expected.

"Now they carry torches," he said to the old man. "How comes that, now when light is breaking?"

"Nay, I know not," the swineherd replied craning his neck to see the faint, ruddy sparks which glimmered beyond.

All the men about Angus now saw the lights and a low murmur of anxious inquiry ran among them.

Angus could not decide what to do, for if he rushed forward as his uneasiness prompted him to do, the old priest might yet outwit him; so he continued to stare and to listen.

"By the gods!" he exclaimed at last, "I

surely hear voices which are too many for Fedalm's escort, beside that, they would not dare to thus speak boldly in the company of the Druid and Fedalm. I like it not."

And that moment, faintly borne to them, there came the great ringing laugh of a man. It was the laugh with which Sweynie had greeted Fedalm's inquiry as to the men of MacDubha.

Angus sprang up and out, with one leap of his lithe body. He knew not what could have happened, but he was absolutely sure that no Pict in Fedalm's train could have made that sound. As for the priest, having once heard the cackle which he considered laughter, he knew that 'twas not he who thus thundered on the morning air.

Angus' men almost as keen and swift as himself, needed no word, but were at his side ere he could look around.

Muirdach, who had insisted upon accompanying Angus, however, was the first one to guess rightly who might have made that sound.

"By the gods," he hoarsely whispered to Angus, "could that be the Red One?"

Open-mouthed, Angus stared at him a moment. In the excitement of this immediate matter of the girl he loved, he had forgotten even the existence of this foe, whose presence on that coast had been so strangely revealed to him through Eric's cousin. It did not seem possible that it could be so, but then Angus was a man of deep and passionate feeling and never in all his youth, while the maidens of his own country had cast long looks upon him, had he been so much as conscious of them.

So that now love, full-winged and ardent, possessed him as a fever, and for the last few hours, which he thought to bring his bride to his arms, he had been no more than walking in a trance, all his mental keenness trained upon that one point of rescuing her.

Something of all that Muirdach sensed, as the usually quick-witted youth continued to stare at him.

"'Tis not to be wondered at that thoughts of vengeance should have flown from you," he said, smiling a little, "for such a bride, methinks, falls not to every man. But something must be done. Doubtless the princess and the priest have halted and are in hiding until the Red One and his train shall have passed by. But if perchance, this marauding devil should catch sight of her——"

With a mighty oath Angus strode forward and began slipping through the trees, sure that he would be followed. And while his blood was on fire with the thought of that man who had so dishonored his sister, and with rage at the mere idea that he should set his evil eyes on Fedalm, he had no real belief that he would need to do aught save watch the Sweynie pass who, for some reason of his own, was abroad at so early an hour.

He came quickly through the trees then, with his men at his heels and looked out upon the place where the torches smoked, dispelling the morning mist and what he saw struck him dumb, his eyes almost popping out of his head and his hands fumbling feebly at his sword.

Fedalm sat upon a great shield, borne high by two rough Norsemen and the Red Sweynie walked beside her, his hand on the rim of the shield to steady it.



THE red mist of battle about which Angus had heard old warriors tell became to him, in that moment, reality. Flames shot before his eyes, the blood rushed along his veins so that he could hear its throb and the very hair on his head stirred. The sight of his face, the fighting face of the MacDubha, seen for the first time on their beloved young chieftain, brought a grim smile to the MacDubha's men. But even in his royal rage, Angus' wits returned to him after a moment.

To Muirdach he whispered:

"Send Leary's son to Seumas and bid him come down the bluff following the road of the queen's chariot. To that point will we press in the fight."

The word was passed back to Leary's son, the swiftest runner of all the MacDubhas, and in a second he was gone, melting away in the undergrowth.

Then Angus threw up his hand as a signal—swords were loosened, but kept sheathed, and the men of MacDubha suddenly walked out into the clearing.

The low, guttural exclamation that broke from the Viking's throat was lost in the instant, piteous cry of Fedalm—

"Angus, O Angus!"

And so far over the shield did she lean in her sudden joy that she would have fallen to the ground had not the Sweynie's great hands descended swiftly upon her arm. But at that same moment Angus strode up

to the shield and put his arm about her waist. He knew that if he drew his sword the fight that would immediately ensue would take place too near to Fedalm for her safety and he trusted to the surprise he had given the Red One to secure a moment's respite in which the girl might be flung to a distance. So, though the hero's rage was on him stronger than before, Angus dissembled.

"This is my betrothed," he said, "who is on her journey to me for the bridging. I will take her onward, and the swords of the MacDubhas shall be sheathed until next we meet."

The Viking looked past the maiden, down at young Angus, for of a noble height though the MacDubha was, yet by a head was he the shorter of the two. The savage light eyes of the Red One glared and he heaved a hoarse laugh from his broad chest.

"Let them uncover, MacDubha," he said. "'Tis no more than a moment's time for me to break them as I broke them before, far from here."

The Viking put his right hand to his waist for his sword, having the left still on the shield and in that moment Angus swept Fedalm from it, while with his right hand he struck the Red One's knuckles with the flat of his sword, which he had had ready to his hand.

The great sword of the Viking fell from the numbed hand, striking the legs of the bearers of the shield, so that they and the shield fell to the ground together, striking the Viking such a blow behind the knees that he lost his balance and fell to the ground.

The Viking's men, some of whom had been walking at some distance from him when Angus came so suddenly from the woods, were so confused by this strange mishap of their chief, and by not having had a signal from him for an attack, that they did not move as swiftly as was their wont, so that Angus, with Fedalm in his arms and protected by the crossed swords of his men, had won backward through them before they rallied sufficiently to pursue him.

"Back! Back with me, men of Dubhross!"* Angus shouted. "Safety for the princess—then the fight."

So, for the first time in their lives, the

MacDubha men ran, but they were not ashamed of doing it and one or two of the hardiest found time and breath to toss back a taunting jest to the Viking band, saying that they would return as soon as their prize was within walls. Angus, also, for all that events had turned out to be very different from what he had anticipated, laughed aloud.

Had he not his bride in his arms? And was there not a fight before him which honor demanded? What more could a true man ask? So they fled and Angus, panting a little, for Fedalm was no lightweight, for all her fair beauty, said to one of the younger men, whose hunting horn hung from his neck—

"Run you forward to the road and sound your horn, that Seumas may know that there is need of haste."

Now by that time the Red Sweynie had recovered the use of his arm and he was bellowing with rage so that his men, turning, soon began to come up to the MacDubhas.

"We will hold them off while you get the princess away," Muirdach said and Angus nodded and ran the faster, while his men stayed their steps to give battle.

It was not what he wished to do, but he knew that no man among his followers was as strong as he to carry Fedalm, and while the girl was herself strong, it would have been impossible for her to run in the thin, embroidered sandals which covered her feet, for the way was rough and rocky.

And soon he ran with a grimmer intent, for as he glanced back he saw that the Viking and his band pressed the MacDubhas hard. And even though Muirdach was a wily and heavy fighter, he was somewhat handicapped since the men with him were few in number and not the best warriors of the clan. It had been thought necessary to take but the younger men for an expedition where so little resistance was to be expected.

And so the mass of fighting men came nearer and nearer to Angus, despite his swiftness; and again and again the great Viking all but broke through the circle which the MacDubhas persisted in holding around him, and Angus knew, suddenly as he knew many things without understanding how he did, that it was the girl which drew the sea rover on to such savage fighting,

* Dubhross, *i. e.*, Dubha of the Rock. This expression was never used except in battle-cries and commands, and is poetic.

even more than hatred of the clan which he had already forced to flee from their home before him.

Then from before him, Angus heard the horn blown, and his heart leaped as he heard an answering shout and recognized the voice of Seumas. So he took one precious moment to whisper to Fedalm:

"Beloved, how fares it with you? Greatly I fear that this night's work will make you ill again, but fear not. Look up along the bluff and you will see the home that is yours."

"Heed me not, Angus, dearest one of all," the girl replied; "that I am with you is enough, so if a sword pierces you, it shall leave me not alive, and if we win through to that dear home, then shall we also be together."

Angus felt his heart swell with pride and love, and there with the echoes of fighting men's struggles behind them and with the sound of Seumas and the rest of the MacDubhas running toward them, Angus bent his dark head and took a long sweet draft of those lips which none but he had ever touched.

And then he drew a deep breath, for the wine of love is more potent than any mead; and his eyes were alight as he stood up to his full height, settled the girl more firmly in his arms and dashed ahead, for the chalky road which ran below his own bluff-top, which had been worn by Tlaya's chariots was before him.

But at that moment there was a warning shout behind and the Sweynie, himself, came bursting through the battling guard of MacDubhas, staggering with several wounds and stumbling somewhat, but plunging forward with the speed and ferocity of a maddened bull. Angus ran then, indeed, and in a instant had leaped into the road, raising the cry for his brother, and then as he bent low, running for the cliff's base—that he might not make too good a target for some accurate javelin—the road beyond swarmed with men, with Seumas himself, with his sword in his hand at their head.

But now the Sweynie and his men were close and Angus had no more than time to wave his sword in their direction before he threw himself and his precious burden into the obscurity of the trees on the other side of the road. Once there, he breathed deeply and then began a stealthy ascent

of the secret path to the bluff-top which the MacDubhas had cut.

XI



IN AFTER days Angus often wondered how he had gone up that steep, rough path so quickly, carrying Fedalm, but rage and hunger for the fight gave him the strength of two men; for, as he looked down, just before he began to climb, he saw that Seumas and the Red Sweynie were engaged, hand to hand, and that while his brother was a tall, strong man, he was no more than a match for his opponent, unless it were in his lesser years and in the staying power which a clean, simple life gives a fighter.

The few who had been left to guard the dun were astonished when they saw Angus, streaming with sweat, scratched and torn from the briers along the path, burst upon them. Breathlessly he confided Fedalm to their care, warned them to hold the gate and the walls against all, no matter under what pretext they might seek admittance, and no more than waiting to press the hand of the princess, he sprang away again.

His descent was swift, for he slid from one declivity to another, spurred forward by the raucous cries, the clash of weapons, the groans, shouts and curses of the men who struggled below him, all across the queen's dusty chariot road.

Just as he was about to leap down into the thick of the fight, he paused, arrested by seeing how the battle was apparently focusing at one point, and that the cause of it was that his brother and the Sweynie, after seeming to have broken away from each other, were again rushing to personal combat. Behind and around them whirled and swayed their respective followers in mad confusion, slashing, clinching together, rolling and tumbling underfoot, rising but to be at once cut down by some upraised sword.

A wild howl went up suddenly—

"Aicil Dubha na Creige!"

And in that instant the Red Sweynie fell. But before the shout of triumph could be repeated, Seumas, also, disappeared beneath the feet of his own followers and those of his enemies.

With a leap like a madman Angus cleared the road and precipitated himself into the midst of the fighters, at the place

where he had seen his brother go down. The men of either side were pushing each other back from attending their wounded chieftains. Angus saw, at a glance, that the Red One was but stunned, and was that moment heaving up his great chest in a partial recovery; but Seumas lay motionless and blood from his right upper arm spurted dangerously up his shoulder.

Around him, in a circle, his men fought off the Viking's men while his own shield-bearer, kneeling beside him, was binding tightly around his chief's arm strips torn from his scarf, to stay the fearful ebb of blood.

That Seumas should be speedily borne from the conflict was the main thing to be thought of, and Angus, rallying his men with the battle-cry of the clan, made a wall of them between the Sweynie and Seumas, engaging the bodyguard and worrying those who were attempting to revive the Viking and get him to his feet.

Seeing the fierceness of the young MacDubha's attack, some of the Sweynie's men, fearing that he would be overcome should he attempt to renew the fight, made an effort to get him, also, away from the field. The rest of the Sweynie's men, therefore, ranged up in close formation in several long lines, to cover their companions' retreat with the wounded man.

The men of MacDubha, seeing this, sought to press their advantage, but were stubbornly resisted, until the bodyguard of the Viking had disappeared in a deep ravine; then they retreated, fighting but giving ground. So, down the road, beneath the beetling cliffs hurtled the throngs of the MacDubhas, close upon the heels of the Norsemen.

So close, in truth, did they press, that they drove the Norsemen forward faster than those with the wounded chieftain could travel, and at the mouth of the glen the Sweynie, who had gradually been recovering his wits, suddenly gave one of his great bellows and turned, charging through his own men and coming straight for Angus.

Blood was streaming from the great Viking's head, making it redder than ever; blood poured from a corner of his mouth, and his rush was a series of blind though ferocious staggers.

Seeing that they could not stop their chief his men whirled swiftly to fight, while those within the glen hastened to send out

a flight of arrows, with which they were all equipped, for long-distance fighting. These last did much damage to the MacDubhas, some of them being blinded by them.

Angus stood his ground. Weakened as the Red One was, he was yet a formidable adversary, and although the thought of his sister's wrongs and his brother's hurt stung Angus to fury, he determined to fight coolly, and, if possible, to make an end of this ravaging demon of a man.

But for all Sweynie's wound, his right arm was more than a match for Angus, who had never engaged a man of his weight or reach before; and it would have gone hard with the young man, light and agile as he was, and courageous as the purity of his blood and his high honor could make him, if Sweynie had not suddenly sunk down at his feet, fainting from his enormous loss of blood, and from the wound in his head, which had cut deep.

As it was, Angus, with a shout, raised his sword to dispatch the life of his fallen foe-man, for he cared nothing for his usual generosity, which would have waited until the other was again able to stand on his feet. To Angus, who knew how the Red One had harried Uladh, how he had deflowered the maidens, how he had done to many as to the sweet maid of Dubhross, it was no more than killing a mad dog to plunge a sword into the unclean body.

But Angus did not succeed in doing so. As his sword flashed in the sun, Sweynie's men threw themselves upon him in such weight and numbers that he was obliged, instead, to fight with them for his very life.

The MacDubhas immediately pressed close to their young chieftain, and again the fight became a wild, whirling mass of men, which milled around and around Angus, and in smaller circles around other separate fights.

Angus made desperate attempts to break through the ring of men who opposed him, but more of his men had been hurt than he had realized, and Muirdach, who was a host in himself, was lying still, somewhere back on the road. So the fight was held, almost stationary, the while four strong fellows heaved up the now unconscious Sweynie and carried him off on their shields.

Immediately after, some kind of a signal must have reached the Viking's fighters, for they suddenly gave ground, again, and that time Angus let them go, for to follow such

desperate men into the glen, where an ambush could so easily be made, would be but folly, since so many of the MacDubhas were either painfully or slightly wounded; and those who were blinded by the arrows were in great agony. Moreover, Angus was in great fear because of Seumas and because of Muirdach.

Gradually, then, waiting to see that the Norsemen had really gone, Angus and his men went back along the road, carrying their wounded, and a very shorn and disheveled lot they were. However, they were not downcast, for they knew that they had given these men of the Red Sweynie a tough fight, and that, since last they had stood up to that same bloody crew, they had gotten more prowess. Moreover, they were proud of their young chief.

Muirdach they found living, though with a sword thrust through him which had escaped his vitals only by a miracle, and then, taking him up, they went on as swiftly as they could.

 THOSE who had borne Seumas away from the fight had tried to keep Fedalm from knowing of his hurt, but she was too anxious to remain with her women in the beautiful little house which Angus had had made for her, and therefore she was walking about on the high lawn when Seumas was borne up the winding, enclosed road which led to the heart of the dun.

The old leech, too feeble to follow his masters to the fray, as he had been wont to do in earlier years, was yet as full of learning as ever, and he had made all preparations for the care of such wounded as might soon be brought to him. A man of rare skill was he and ancient learning, which the house of MacDubha had out of their country of Uladh. So Seumas was at once given into his care; and as he plied his art, he was aroused by a touch on his arm, and looking up, thought at first that he saw one of the goddesses of ancient times before him.

"Let me help you, my father," said the apparition, "for Seumas is my brother, as he is that of Angus."

Then the old man understood, and the rarely sweet smile which was his passed over his aged face.

"You come in a good time, my daughter," he said, "for you will be more skilful in laying on these steeped herbs than the maids of the household, I know, O Fedalm."

Her name, so kindly pronounced, and the smile with which Seumas greeted her, for the leech would not let him speak, and the house which she had found prepared for her, and the folk of the MacDubhas, so much more gentle and bright-eyed than her mother's unruly Picts, all combined to fill the girl's heart with a warmth she had not known, not even when her father was alive.

So she tended Seumas, as he lay in the great hall, and she looked happily about, feeling that at last she had found her true place in the world.

But underneath all that, where her pride and courage kept it pressed, there was the gnawing, tearing fear of what might be happening to Angus, down there among the bloodthirsty Vikings. What if she were to lose her lover before ever she had spent one sweet day in his company?

Fedalm thought that Seumas had his eyes closed, but he saw the shadow that came and went across her face and he truly divined its cause, and when the leech had gone away for a moment, he beckoned that he would speak with her. So Fedalm bent her head over him, and all the rain of her fragrant sweet hair fell upon his breast, and Seumas, for the moment, was filled with a strange disquiet which he did not understand. But then he smiled up at the girl:

"Fret not for Angus, O Fedalm," he said, weakly, "for the Sweynie was down when I was borne from the field. It is likely that the boy but lingers to finish that which was begun."

Fedalm said that doubtless that was the way of it, and then she gathered her hair in her two hands and swept it from his bosom, but the sweet odor of it lingered, and Seumas shut his eyes and dreamed, though that of which he dreamed was no more than the thought of the peaceful home which he and Angus should have, with this sweet girl, after the Red Sweynie and all his brood should have been accounted for.

Then came Angus, toward midday, for he had come the long way around to the dun, since that was an easier road for the wounded. He had suffered a few cuts, and he was begrimed, dusty and weary, but his smile was as gay as ever, for news had been brought to them, as the watchers on the walls saw him coming, and he knew that Seumas, while sorely hurt, was in no danger of his life.

When Fedalm heard that the warriors

were at the door of the hall she arose from beside Seumas, and when she saw Angus she cast herself on his breast, and wept out her relief at seeing him firm on his feet, and but little harmed. And Angus, at last freed from all that had troubled him, and knowing that his marriage-day was come, laughed aloud in his happiness.

But even his joy could keep him but a moment from Seumas, to whom he said that the Sweynie was, unhappily, not dead—at least, he was not when borne away, but that he was gravely wounded, and that, for, a time at least, the MacDubhas might devote themselves to caring for their wounded; and of those who had gone out, none were dead, though the men who were blinded grieved much thereat, and would have preferred to have lost their lives, instead.

Then Angus made Fedalm go to her house, for the long travel at night, and the terrors she had endured, had left her cheek pale.

"Go and sleep, sweet woman," he said, as he caressed her bright head, "and to-night—if the gods spare me for such joy—shall you pour the wine in the wedding-cup."

The two stood near to the couch of Seumas, and otherwise there were none in the hall, for so the leech had ordered, and they made naught of their brother, smiling at him as they talked or kissed each other; and Seumas smiled in return, and marveled that he could not restrain an occasional great sigh which threatened to rend his bosom.

Observing that, Fedalm cried:

"Surely we are forgetful, Angus, that Seumas is sorely hurt and needs rest. The leech will return soon and remain with him, so let us leave him in quiet, and not disturb him with our foolishness."

So they went out, but before that Fedalm laid her little hand upon the forehead of Seumas, and murmured that he was her very dear brother; and when the leech went in to Seumas, soon after, he found him asleep, with a smile upon his lips.

So all the long, bright afternoon the old leech, with the maids of the household of the hall, went to and fro among the wounded, laying cloths soaked in healing ointments upon their wounds; and within her house Fedalm slept sweetly, under the wondering care of the women Angus had appointed for her attendance; and Angus

also slept and refreshed him, and put on his wedding garments.

The chief steward was also busily engaged during those hours, for there was much to be done in the kitchens; good broth to be brewed, and sides of venison to be turned before the fires, and mead to be brought from the deep caverns in the earth where it was kept, for coolness.

And while guards were set strongly about the walls, lest the Sweynie's men should, perchance, venture an attack, yet there was no really serious thought of it; and therefore many of the lads went out, with a few warriors, into the countryside, to gather flowers from the hedgerows and heather from the fields, wherewith to deck the hall.

Ferna and the harper, too, rehearsed the songs which they would sing around the wedding-board. And near to sunset, when Fedalm emerged from her house, with her women about her, she was met by the youths and maidens of the MacDubhas, who held green branches above her head, and conducted her to the hall, where Angus and many of the warriors awaited her coming. Seumas, also, was there, upon his couch, for he had stubbornly refused to be carried to a quieter place.

"Nay, Leech!" he said. "Methinks this happiness of my brother will prove more healing to me than even thy good care. Moreover, it is not fitting that so beauteous and royal a bride should come to our house, with the elder chief of it absent. See, I will promise to lie very still and not to speak."

So the old leech took his place by the side of Seumas. And then, as the green boughs of the youths and maidens were held above the head of Fedalm, at the door, she entered, and all the MacDubhas, within and without the hall, shouted mightily. And thereupon the bard and the harper swept into the sweet, lilting cadences with which the brides of the MacDubhas had been welcomed to the wedding-feast, time out of mind.

Fedalm's heart beat high, and tears filled her eyes, and blushes went and came across her face, but she held herself right royally as she came down the hall to the place where Angus awaited her, so that both the brothers were filled with pride because of her, and because they saw that she would be a woman well fitted for the high seat in the

MacDubha household, and well worthy of its ancient power, and its traditions of fair and queenly women.

Then sat they down, and the good mead was passed from horn to horn, but with moderation, and not for drunkenness, as in Queen Tlaya's hall, whereat Fedalm was glad. The bard sang on for a time, hushing his voice, so that it was no more than a bird's note, and then ceasing altogether, for Fedalm took the great, ceremonial cup of the MacDubhas in her hand, and stood, to pour the wedding mead for Angus.

Throughout the great hall, and in the kitchens, and in every part of the dun, then, there was utter silence, for the steward had arranged that so there should be, at a certain signal. Fedalm's hand was steady, and all the maidenly shyness gone from her in that moment.

"Lo, I pour for thee the cup which shall unite us," she said, in a clear, far-carrying voice, "which union may the bright gods bless. Moreover, I pledge to thee all that is mine, in land or goods or peoples, and I swear to be thine, in body and spirit, in speech and deed, all the hours which the gods shall allot me, until the time when I go to the Land of No Return."



SUCH words as these were prescribed for the bride of any noble house, but Fedalm spoke them as a king's child should, so that, when she had ceased, all those who had heard her cried aloud their love and loyalty to her, and again a mighty shout went up, not only from those within the hall, but from every part of the dun, from the watchers on the walls, and from the very children at their mother's knee.

One there was, without the dun, who heard, and paused to listen, and rightly interpreted it. Arnulf had come slipping across the hills and the waste places to carry the news of Fedalm's kingdom to her.

He stood where he was as the shout died away, rigid and still. He knew that naught but a marriage-feast would bring such sounds of revelry from the quiet, sober MacDubhas, and for a long, long moment he stood so, beating down the agony of knowing that Fedalm was passed into the keeping of her lover, and that no longer might he think, with honor, on her beauty.

Alone, in the shadows, he fought out that which he knew he must bear with to his

death, and then, with a firm step, and a good smile upon his face, he passed onward and cried for entrance at the gate.

When he entered the hall the feast was full and the merriment high. In the midst of it sat Fedalm and Angus, putting their lips to horn after horn, as they were passed, that so every MacDubha might drink again from his cup, after them, and so pledge his allegiance anew to the house of his fathers.

And then the young Norseman suddenly strode into the midst of them, and took a horn from the table and gave it to Angus.

"My horn, also, O Angus," he said, "shall be entered in this pledge-drink. For I am the man of Fedalm, as I was her father's—may the gods give him sight of this good day! Moreover, I speak for all my kinsmen, who are also her men, and so acknowledge through me. Not laggardly they in being absent from this feast; but wise, as has been agreed upon. Nevertheless are they true in their faith; and when our queen shall call, not one voice of ours shall fail to answer. I have spoken."

Fedalm arose then and took the youth by the hand and brought him to sit between Angus and herself, and the men of the MacDubha raised their hands toward him, in salutation, and in token that they accepted him as a brother and kinsman.

"How fares it among you?" Fedalm asked, anxiously.

"I bring you some strange tidings, O Fedalm," he answered, "and some news which will cause you to smile."

"What says the queen as to my rescue by my lord?" Fedalm asked, and the color crept to even her little ears as she spoke, for it was the first time that she had used that word; and Angus touched her knee beneath the table that she might know that he, also, felt the sweetness of her speaking of it through all his heart.

The youth kept his eyes, smilingly, upon his cup, but the manner of it, for a moment, was fixed and grim, for he saw the by-play and felt, in his heart also how sweet it might be to hear it from her lips. All that passed in a flash, and then he laughed, as he said—

"In truth, she says naught of it, for she knows it not."

Both Angus and Fedalm exclaimed upon that, and all the MacDubhas crowded around to hear what had caused their surprise.

"Thus it is," he continued, "and a

strange way for the whole matter to fall out. Your meetings with our princess, O Angus, have been strictly kept to the knowledge of only the Norsemen, and of them only such as are not wedded to Pictish women; so that not one Pict knows that our princess ever saw aught of you, except for the one time when you paused at her house. That much is known, for one of the soldiers who guarded her, that day, has a Pictish wife, to whom he told it.

"Moreover the Norsemen have seemed to be less rebellious than they were for a time, according as Eric tutored them, and the queen had no thought that any one would attempt to take Fedalm from the old Druid—whom may the gods blast with his own curses.

"Nevertheless, she dared not send Norsemen to be the escort of the priest and the princess into the hills; Picts of her own household were chosen, as you know, O Fedalm. Cowards and tale-bearers are they, all. So with one accord they fled from the sight of the Viking, and when they saw you attack the priest and vanquish him——"

He stopped to laugh and Angus, laughing, too, cried that he knew naught of this.

"Nay, 'twas nothing!" Fedalm protested in confusion.

"The Pict who carried the tale said that you had magic in your hand, for that the power of it sent the priest far up the path, running, and that you also were able to overcome all of those who struggled, with due respect for your sacred person, to withhold you from your flight."

"Nay, nay, nay!" Fedalm insisted, as every one laughed. "'Twas not so. I did but send one of them sprawling with my foot. And as for Kapultep, such a coward is he that should a wing of a fly graze his nose, he would consider himself in bodily danger."

"Aye, 'tis so," the youth agreed, while the MacDubhas chuckled in their beards at the girl's witty simile, "but according to the Picts it was far otherwise. So they all fled, as fast as they could, and although the Druid recovered his wits, after a while, and tried to force them to go back after you, he could in no wise prevail upon them. And as for going back alone, he would not, though the Picts sneered openly at him, in that he could not trust the gods to protect him, about whose special care he has so often boasted.

"Thus, O Fedalm, did they stay themselves at a distance, so that they knew not that the MacDubhas came, for by the time that the fight waxed loud on the night air, the priest and the Pictish escort were on their way back to the fortress. Kapultep, knowing that the queen had made a pact of friendship with the Viking, whom he had recognized as the leader of the band toward which you had fled, decided that you would be safe with him until such time as the queen could demand you of him.

"In truth, no one even among the Norsemen would have known otherwise, were it not for the old swineherd, who had remained, lurking in the rear of the fight, until he saw the Sweynie borne off from the chalk road all but dead and yourself unharmed, though of Seumas he reported that he was dead."

"Not so, O new brother," said Seumas, suddenly, speaking for the first time.

The youth arose and went to him, then, that he might greet him, so Fedalm and Angus went to sit by the couch of Seumas, that he might hear whatever else the youth could tell.

"So there is talking, open and secret, in the fortress," Arnulf went on, after he had hastily repeated what he had already told Angus and Fedalm, "and Kapultep and the queen have been alone in the hall for long, tossing to and fro their sour compliments, as you can imagine! The queen called the priest cat-hearted for not wresting you from the Viking, and taunted him that you would rather flee to a stranger, risking all that a maiden holds dear, than continue in his company. And the Druid, on his part, hinted to her that she was but jealous of your youth and beauty, which would dim the impression which she thought she had made upon the sea rover.

"But, in truth, they soon began to speak more to the point, for now it is impossible for the queen to say that the princess chose, of her own will, to be priestess in the great fire tower. Moreover, the flight of Kapultep from the Viking has weakened the respect and fear in which the Picts held him.

"And as the Pictish escort knew that the queen sent the princess willingly away, and as their coward souls are ever under the hand of one who dares to chastise them, they now whisper among themselves that the princess is a wonder worker, and a

goddess, whose magic is stronger than the Druid's; and that it would be well if she were to sit upon her father's throne.

"And both Kapultep and the queen distrust the Viking, thinking that he will make alliance with your house rather than with hers, since she is a woman ruler and also has less skilled fighters. She fears, too, that he will refuse to give up you, O Fedalm."

"The Norsemen have been told all this by Eric, so that they are laughing, tonight, and they will laugh with all the more cheer when I tell them of this happening, to which I now drink my good wishes, O Fedalm and Angus."

"Tis well," Seumas said, after lying silent, while the merry-making went on a time, "and it would seem to me that for a while we should wait upon the turn of fate. Thy kinsmen have not been sent for, have they, Fedalm?"

"No," said Fedalm, "not yet."

"Then let it not be done through any of those Norsemen whom Tlaya claims as her own," replied Seumas, "for if even a small galley and men be missing, she will suspect a plot. Rather will one of our own slip away in the night to our shores, and from there it shall go on to your kinsmen, Fedalm, and tell them of your need."

"Thus, those who are sent from your people and our people shall come together, and when their sails are seen in the bay that shall be the signal for the Norsemen in Tlaya's fortress to slip away to us. So we shall have a strong band to use against the Red Sweynie and his crew, and it will go hard if we do not lay them all low."

"The Sweynie will wait, no doubt, until he can send for other sea rovers before he attacks us, so that there will be time for the message to be sent and to be answered. And then, when we shall have disposed of this wicked Viking, we will seat you on your rightful throne, O Fedalm, and we will wall up the queen and the wicked priest in the great fire tower; sending them food and raiment and drink, but denying them to walk abroad, to spread mischief. And the Picts, who, as the wise youth has truly said, worship ever those who are strong enough to chastise them—they will accept your rulership. And between you and the MacDubhas we will hold the land hereabouts, in honor, and giving justice to all."

XII



AT HIGH noon of a day three risings of the moon past the night when Fedalm had left Tlaya's fortress on the shoulders of her Pictish bearers, a Norseman who did sentry duty beyond the encampment where the Red Sweynie lay suddenly strained forward to look down upon the road which wound below him, skirting the shore.

"By the gods!" he exclaimed aloud. "What comes?"

Being alone at that point, none answered him, and so astonished was he that he forgot that it was his duty to instantly announce the approach of any to the camp of his chief. Open-mouthed, he continued to stare as the amazing procession passed, below his eyes.

First came gay-garbed dancers piping along in the white dust, in advance of sober footmen bearing short, ceremonial javelins—not the long, sharp lances of war. Back of these, musicians walked, clapping cymbals of glistening metal, while a row of jugglers in motley array tossed up and caught again shining wands and glittering balls.

These last, with their antics, were evidently for the pleasure of a majestic, sulky-faced but beautiful woman who lounged heavily in a great chariot, drawn by four high-stepping horses. Perhaps, too, to divert her mind from the hideous squeaking and discordant clatter of the thick, clumsy wheels of her vehicle, and the jangling of the long poles, jerking on their chains between the restless horses. Over her was spread a canopy of bright colors: red, and the deep shade of woad and saffron.

Behind her, following another group of dancers, foot soldiers, musicians and jugglers creaked a second chariot, less magnificent, and with but two horses. In this was seated a priest and two lesser priests—that much of the train the watcher above recognized, for the garments of the Druidic priesthood were known to every civilized race of that day.

Behind him streamed a long line of retainers, soldiers, musicians, men bearing gifts and country folk, walking in a certain rude order, the whole being brought to an end by a small chariot or two, bearing piles of skins and cooking and eating utensils.

Whatever the purpose of this most surprising procession, which now began to

climb upward along the path which would bring it out on the bluff above, that purpose was evidently not unfriendly, so the sentinel sped swiftly to the rough hut, hastily constructed, where his wounded chieftain lay. And in quick, accurate words, he described the impending visitors.

The Sweynie frowned heavily, for he had no mind to be seen by Queen Tlaya while he was still wound in bandages and hardly able to stand upon his feet; but there was no help for it, for as the man told his tale, the sound of the clashing cymbals could be plainly heard.

"Go," the Red One said hastily, "take a company of your fellows and escort the queen to me. Have a tent raised, large enough to give shelter from the sun for the priest and such as he may choose to be with him, and give of what you can to the retainers and entertainers. Haste!"

Not without cause did the Norseman frown as he sat alone, as the sentinel sped to do his bidding; for he had rightly estimated the Pictish queen's love of luxury and valuation of pomp and display, and he knew that his rough camp, with its lack of furnishings, would impress her unfavorably, even though she knew that they had but a few days before come on land from a long and dangerous voyage.

But as the Pictish queen was led into his hut by one of his men, he smiled as though her visit was the one thing for which he had longed.

"Welcome, O Tlaya!" he exclaimed. "And take it not amiss that I do not rise to my feet to greet your graciousness, which thus honors my hasty encampment."

Tlaya smiled, also, but more mechanically, for she was seized with such astonishment that she could but ill conceal it. She had seen many wounded men lying about the camp of the Viking, and here was the man, himself, in a very bad condition. As usual, her mind raced back and forth, conjecturing, scheming—trying to see how this and that could be turned to her own advantage.

"Indeed, it grieves me to see you, O Sweynie, the Red One," she replied, as she sank down upon the pile of skins which had been placed for her. "How comes it that you are so disabled? Has a deer gored you?"

Sweynie was utterly taken by surprise by the queen's speech. It did not seem

possible that she could be ignorant of the fight which had taken place, and yet, it did not seem possible, either, that she would attempt to feign ignorance of it. And why this visit of state? For all his bull courage and blackness of heart the Viking was a shrewd, clever man, and suddenly he made up his mind to tell the thing as it really was to the Pictish Queen. The pause he made was only slight, but it warned Tlaya that more lay behind all this than she had thought.

"I will tell you the story, O Tlaya," he said, slowly, "though somewhat I doubt whether you do not, already, know it."

Now the queen, on her part, had made up her mind, too, that she would be frank, for if Sweynie held Fedalm it would be necessary, and that he held her, the queen did not doubt for a moment, there being no other place in which she could have remained concealed, while she had been diligently searched for through three days and nights.

"I know naught, O Sweynie," she replied, "save that you were lucky enough, three nights ago, to catch and hold my unhappy daughter, whose disease of the mind I thought to conceal by sending her to the fire tower. It seemed to me that, as a courteous chieftain, you would send her home as soon as you realized her affliction, but as you did not I came to you, bringing with me a few gifts with which to show my thankfulness for your care of my poor child."

This was the tale which she and the priest has concocted, for they feared, greatly, that Fedalm would have told him such tales as would cause him to be an enemy.

Now Sweynie had seen a great many men and women and maidens, in his day, and he knew instantly that the queen lied. A saner, more self-controlled maid the sea rover had seldom met. Nevertheless, he nodded grave assent.

"So that is it!" he exclaimed. "That accounts for her leaving the care of your good priest, and for the wild tale she told me as she besought me to protect her."

"The gods send her recovery!" Tlaya ejaculated, piously.

She had not failed to read the eyes of the Viking, nor to flush a little under their scorn, but yet she held her open, frank manner well.

"A care and a burden she must have been to you during this time, which I know you

will gladly be rid of. If you will deign to have my presents brought to you, and would care to hear my musicians—then, as the sun dips, I will take my girl away.”

“That you will not do,” the Viking asserted, stoutly.

He knew what interpretation Tlaya would put on that and played with her.

The queen shot him a glance of veiled fury.

“Methinks ’twould be unwise to refuse my daughter to me,” she purred, in the deep, throaty voice which always showed her concealed anger.

“In truth, O Queen, it would be most unwise, and not a thing which I would do. I do not refuse you your daughter, but I say that you will not take her away from here; and that you will not, for the excellent reason that she is not here.”

For several moments after he had spoken Tlaya remained staring at him. It had not occurred to her that he would take this line, one, moreover, which could not be disproven. If he chose to declare that Fedalm was not in his camp, it would be impossible to search it without a fight, and that Tlaya had no wish for. Things were difficult enough, as it was, with the Mac-Dubhas on one bluff-head, the Viking on the other, the Norsemen in her own kingdom disquietingly cheerful and Fedalm at large.

“You have doubtless already sent her home, by the upland paths, while I came on the shore road,” she said, finally, trying to smile.

If he had not so sent her, perhaps he would now secretly do so, while he kept the visitor’s attention engaged. But the Sweynie shook his head.

“Come, come, Queen Tlaya,” he bantered. “Is’t not possible that you know somewhat of your daughter, other than you have said? What of the young chieftain who dwells with his brother on the outermost head? Surely, surely, you know that it is from his hands and his brother’s—may the gods bring evil on them—” there, for one moment, his bitter rage slipped out—“that I have these wounds, and that it is from his men that mine are hurt? It is not possible that such a fight as ours, during which your daughter was snatched from me—and, in truth, she was glad so to be—could not have come to your ears?”

But even as he spoke, he knew that it was so, for Tlaya’s amazement mastered her.

“What say you?” she cried. “What say you? How can such a thing be? Wait—send you for the Druid, O Sweynie, for this concerns him.”

Sweynie instantly sent the soldier who stood without the hut for the priest, and then he turned a cold eye upon Tlaya.

“I thought as much,” he said, “and now, perhaps, you will tell me the truth—or, let me tell it to you, for your daughter, in whose lips there are no lies, told me in the brief space when she sat on my shield. It is this hideous old priest who desires the girl for himself, and to whom you would give her, from whom she flies. More, she flies to her betrothed, for whose men, in her fright, she mistook some of mine.”



“HERE is some sweet news for your ear, O Priest!” Tlaya exclaimed, as Kapultep came into the hut and gravely saluted the Viking, and she repeated what had just been told, caring nothing that all her rage and fury were disclosed to the Viking, who, several times, could not forbear a smile as he saw the priest and the woman gnashing their teeth over the miscarriage of their plans.

But although he listened and learned far more of the affairs in the Pictish Queen’s kingdom than she intended him to, he took good care not to say that he and the Mac-Dubhas were at deadly feud.

So that, when he agreed to join Tlaya in war upon those in the dun on the far head, he did it, ostensibly, as a favor; and so put himself in the position to demand that he should make the plan of attack, which was what he wanted.

“It is, indeed, a crime against your state, O Tlaya, that your daughter should be held by these upstarts,” he said, “but they are men who stick at nothing, and they have put a very strong fortification on your land, according to your own report. I, myself, am wounded and will not be able to use a sword for some time, and many of my warriors are in the same state. Therefore, let you and your priest content yourselves in what patience you can, knowing that under my leadership these Mac-Dubhas shall be ground to the dust of the road; aye, and such of them as remain alive shall be driven from the land.”

Now, neither Tlaya nor Kapultep liked this assumption of leadership on the part of the Viking, but they were helpless, so

they made the best of the matter, and accepted his word as final.

And Sweynie took good care not to say what he really had in mind; which was to take Fedalm for himself, to seat her on the throne of Tlaya, and to drive her and the Druid far into the interior, with their Picts—for he had heard, from some of the tale-bearing Picts who herded the queen's cattle, of the many Norsemen in her domain, and he thought it very likely that they would follow Fedalm and himself with a good will.

Tlaya was not without a suspicion of the real plans of her giant ally, but she had great faith in her own ability to work her will upon men; and since Sweynie made no mention of the girl in his plans for the future, and as it was a sure thing that he could not have sight of her while she remained with the MacDubhas, she believed that her own beauty and charm and her power of providing rare entertainment would bring the Norseman to the point of wedding her, before the decisive battle which would free the girl.

So she was gracious and pleasing, as she knew well how to be, though she did not often choose, and Kapultep, who had seen her wiles used on a man once before, who had, at first, no mind to be enchained by them, was more content than he had been. And with far greater grace than he would have carried, otherwise, he made an excuse to leave the two alone, while the queen's presents were brought into Sweynie's hut.

Left to themselves, the two bent themselves to the deception of each other. The Sweynie explained to Tlaya his plans for a permanent fortification on the site which he had chosen, and the queen pretended to be overawed by him.

As for the Viking, he accepted the gifts, which the bearers soon brought in with a good grace, and some earnest protestations of pleasure, and well he might, for the queen's gifts included some cows, whose milk would be of value to the many wounded, and implements for all the uses of life, which were greatly lacking among the Norsemen.

"See you, Tlaya," said Sweynie, "how friendship is ever the bond of friendship. These animals and skins and other gear which your good heart prompted you to bring me are most welcome, for when I set sail from the Northland I intended not to be too long away, nor to be elsewhere than on my ships, but the sea prowlers of whom

I told you forced me to take refuge in your bay, for which the gods be thanked. Therefore, am I destitute of such things as these you bring me. But when I return, next year, from a visit to my home, I will repay in kind."

The queen thereupon protested that she required no return, and now, feeling that she dared, she asked a question which had teased her, ever since the night that Fedalm had escaped the priest.

"Much have I wondered, O Sweynie," she cooed, "how it happened that you and your men were abroad at such an hour as to meet my daughter in the place where you did?"

The Viking had been expecting that question, and upon its answer there depended a good deal, he knew, since Tlaya would never cease to spy upon him did she suspect him of concealing anything from her; on the other hand, he had not the least intention of telling her the truth.

So he called the soldier who stood guard on the door and sent him on a trivial errand, and then spoke low and earnestly:

"I know not why I should trust you with this, O Tlaya, but so I am impelled to do. See you that you keep my trust, especially—" he paused, seemed to hesitate and then went on—"especially from the Druid, no matter how close he may be to you in your other counsels."

"That I promise you, O Sweynie," Tlaya replied and by the glitter of satisfaction in her eyes the Viking knew that she would be only too glad to keep anything from him that she could.

"This, then, is the reason that I was abroad with some of my men, O Tlaya," he all but whispered. "There are some of us who have a faith which is not that of Thor and Woden, Norsemen though we be, and when we can we go into the woods to perform its rites, making such excuse as we can to the others, who would surely be strong against us, did they know that we have changed from the gods of our fathers.

"On the night when I met your daughter, we said that we had had a message that you needed to take counsel with me, and my meeting with the princess and fighting in her behalf gave color to the story, for such of my men as know nothing of us who hold a secret faith. But of this I charge you to let drop not one word, even to my men, even should you know that you spoke with such

a one as is my brother in the faith, for they know that I have never whispered aught of this to any, and they would hold me guilty in that I now do so; and why I do, I know not, save that I am inclined to give my full confidence to one as beauteous and wise as you, O Queen!"

Now, the Viking would never have tried to lull the suspicions of a Norse man or woman with such a tale, for he would not have been believed, but well he knew the ready belief in all dark mysteries which the Picts, as a race, had, and he was not surprised to see that even Tlaya, clever as she was in so many ways, accepted the foolish story and was much impressed by it.

"Some day, when we know each other better we will speak upon this secret faith, if so be that you are minded to let me know aught of it," she said, gravely, and Sweynie who, for all his evil, was something of a clown, as well, and dearly loved a jest, answered her grave look with one of solemnity; and then, most mysteriously, he placed one hand upon his brow in a strange fashion, the quick invention of which caused him much self-admiration, and said—

"So do we of the real faith salute each other."

The queen returned the secret sign gravely, and signified her intention to depart; whereupon the Sweynie called his warriors to escort her with all due respect on her way; and when she had gone his startled Norsemen who remained in the encampment heard their chief indulge in such a fit of laughter as they had seldom known to come from his bearded lips.

XIII

 NOW, when the hush of the hottest days of the year lay upon all of that part of the coast, the dwellers in Queen Tlaya's fortress and in the MacDubha dun and in the camp of the Red One, improved the time according to their natures.

The queen, sulky at the failure of her plan for Fedalm, more than ever distrustful of Kapultep, and ill at ease with her Norsemen, who kept an ominous silence on the subject of their mysteriously missing princess, drank heavier of her own heavy mead than ever she had before, and was, by consequence, infinitely more an irritable tyrant within her own walls. But when

Sweynie the Red came, as he did often, to sit at meat with her, she so threw the power of her assumed good nature upon him that sometimes, for a moment, he was all but beguiled by it.

And the Druid, for all that he bitterly resented the queen's apathy toward his disappointment in not securing Fedalm, was well satisfied, for he believed that, in the end, he would be able to rule them both, and to secure the girl.

As for the Sweynie, he nursed his wounds and cared for his health with more of science than historians have always accredited the age in which he lived. He drank less heavily than was his wont, and kept down the rages which sometimes made him purple in the face, and in all things looked well to himself, for though he might sneer to his men about the "children" who were the chieftains of the MacDubhas, he knew in his heart that when he faced Seumas and Angus he would have to put forth the best that was in him.

He continued to tell the queen little lies about his supposedly secret faith, with promises to fully reveal it to her in time, for while his occasional night excursions were not apt to be seen by any one—since the country folk locked doors and barred folds at nightfall and ventured not out until the dawn—still, he thought it best to have an excuse, should it be reported to Tlaya that he and some of his men had been seen crossing the country.

The truth of the matter was that the Red Sweynie had, at last, been overpowered in Uladh by a combination of chiefs, who, laying aside their personal disagreements, had united in a great battle against him; so that he and such of his men as were left had been driven down to their ships, on which they had hurtled and but barely got away with, and that with a great lack of gear and provision.

Several times Sweynie and his men had attempted to land and establish themselves on some other part of their coast, but the word had gone all through the land that he who fought not the despoiler and murderer and thief would be judged as a traitor to his land. Therefore those who had given him tribute before, because of being weak, plucked up courage and set upon him and his men, and in time, like ashes in their mouths, came the knowledge that the land they had overridden and

laid waste for so long had cast them out.

Now there had always been knowledge in the North that Fedalm's father had wedded a rich queen in that far land to which he had fled in his sorrow, and the Sweynie had thought to find refuge with him, saying naught of the deeds he had done, and trusting to good fortune to wrest the kingdom from him, for he would now be very old.

But the situation had been other than he had thought, so the Viking, hearing that the queen, alone, sat on the throne, and that there was a fair maiden whose right it was, had hastily revised his plans. Two of his galleys he sent away, to range up and down the coast, stealing from such husbandmen as had their fields near, robbing travelers and seeking to enlist any unattached fighting men with whom they might chance to meet. And every ten days one of the galleys was to come to a little hidden cove some distance beyond the headland of the MacDubhas and far below it.

There would the Sweynie and some of his men come at night, to receive such booty as had been gathered and to hear how the recruiting of men went forward. The secrecy of the appointed place and the untoward hour of the visit would serve, the Viking thought, to keep any hue and cry from rising in the country, thereabouts, which would connect him with the marauders. All this, most certainly, he desired to keep from the knowledge of Tlaya, to which purpose he found his supposedly secret religion most useful; besides which, it was a good jest, for gradually he took some of his captains into the heart of it, so that on occasion they had rare sport, with their dark hints to the gullible queen.

One of the reasons why the Sweynie, therefore, allowed the time to drag on, in which he made no decision to attack the MacDubhas, was that his two prowling galleys were slowly but surely adding to the number of his men; and the strangers, bloody cutthroats, who owned no rightful master, kept themselves hidden in a camp far on the other side of the coast, and knew not, even, whose men they were to be, but were well content so long as they were well fed and had good mead on which to be drunken, and those things the galleys, sweeping the countryside, contrived to get for them.

As soon as there was a sufficient number of them to add to his own men, and to the queen's Picts, the Sweynie would go into action—for he reckoned naught on the help of Tlaya's Norsemens, whom he strongly suspected of knowing exactly where their princess was and how she fared; they, no doubt, if put to the pinch, would swell the ranks of the MacDubhas.

Sweynie knew well that should Fedalm's Norsemens fly to the standard of her friends—for no hint of the marriage had yet gotten outside the MacDubha dun save to Fedalm's kinsmen—all the force that he could muster would be none too much to oppose to the stanch kinsmen of Seumas and Angus; therefore he ceaselessly plotted as to how to divide their forces, when the decisive moment came.

But far out on the headland where stood the MacDubha dun there was none of this plotting and robbing, tricking, lying and deviltry.

The fair wind from the sea swept refreshingly over the high lawns where Fedalm walked with Angus, and brought renewed strength to Seumas, who lay, hours long in the warm sun, as the leech bade him, and seemed to draw its divine strength down into his body.

The MacDubhas had ever been a peaceful folk among themselves, sober, according to the idea of the times, pure in life and of an outspoken honesty. Now, with the beautiful, witty and gay young princess among them, to cheer and lighten their days, laughter was often in their mouths, and of an evening, when Fedalm took the harper's place and played for them, the jest and the tale went merrily around the board.

In all the dun there seemed not to be a sorrowful heart, those bright days, but Angus sometimes surprised a very grave look upon his brother Seumas' face, and Muirdach, who loved the elder MacDubha as not even Angus did, sometimes put his arm around the great shoulders and pressed hard, to show that he understood.

And he, alone of them all, did. From the rest, and most of all from Fedalm and Angus, Seumas succeeded in hiding that which tore him and made his spirit long for death. For the beauty and sweetness and graces and goodness of his brother's wife had been too much for the gentle Seumas to bear. Against his uttermost strivings, he loved her, and that so passionately that

sometimes he wondered how she could sit beside him, as she often did, embroidering, or spinning, and not hear the words which his beating heart cried out to her.

But when Angus accused him of being overgrave, at times, Seumas replied that, as the head of the house, he must take thought on many things; and especially must he take counsel with himself as to the overthrow of that Red Sweynie who had followed them over the seas, a favor which the gods had given, that he might be delivered up into their hands for just punishment for his crime upon their sister.



SO ANGUS believed that and gave no more anxious thought to it when he saw Seumas grave, but Muirdach noted, as did none else, that his foster-brother grew slowly thinner. But his strength grew, so that each day he and Angus and all the fighting men of the clan practised sword play together on the high lawns.

Fedalm loved the peace and orderliness of her home, and she and Angus passed many a happy hour in the small house which was hers, and there would have been naught lacking to her happiness had she but been able to feel that the Norsemen of her kingdom were with her. But of them she had frequent news, for Arnulf and Eric, came at night across the rough country, to tell her all that happened in her old home, and all that her Norsemen knew or surmised of the doings of her step-mother.

Thus the MacDubhas were well informed as to Sweynie's comings and goings, but as the queen took no Norseman into her confidence, and as not one of the Picts had ever so been taken, no one suspected the deep laid plan which she and the Viking had hatched.

"It is said by the Viking's own men that they but tarry for the Summer on our shores," Eric told Seumas, "and, in truth, it would seem so, for no preparation is being made in his fortress for the Winter. His walls are high, and his watchers sharp of eye and ear, and his men well accoutered of weapons, but he takes no care to furnish him with food for the months when all he can have will be that which he gets by hunting—therefore I think he speaks truly."

But Seumas shook his head, in his slow and thoughtful way.

"'Tis strange," he said, "that the Red One spends months on a shore so far from his land; moreover, lives in peace with his neighbor, who is a woman, with a defenseless kingdom divided against itself—which he must know well, if he is often within her fortress. And these men of his are fewer in number than I have ever seen about him. What think you, Angus?"

Now Angus, for all his eager interest in the Sweynie, had chanced to be looking at Fedalm as they talked, and had leaned forward to exchange some low word with her, whereat she smiled and playfully touched his cheek; so that now, when Seumas spoke to him, Angus could do naught but flush a little and laugh and confess that for the moment his thoughts had wandered.

And Seumas smiled also, but his pain was so sharp that it showed a little, and Eric saw it, but he had no fear of the love of Fedalm dividing the two brothers, or working aught to her save good, for he had measured the unselfishness and goodness of Seumas when first he set eyes on him. So he leaned over, as if in unconscious friendship, and touched him lightly on the knee; and Seumas, who was a quick man to feel things, was comforted, for well he knew that his secret was safe with such as had true enough eyes to find it.

A long time they sat, that night, discussing the many things in which they were interested, but there was somewhat which Eric hid, awaiting the time when Seumas would walk down the long liss—guarded lane—to the gate, as was his wont. Mostly they spoke of how long it would take the small galley, which had been sent secretly away, to call help from the kinsmen of the MacDubhas and from Fedalm's kinsmen, to return.

So at last Eric rose to go, and Fedalm kissed him on the cheek, as she said:

"Take my kiss to Rula, dear Eric, and tell her that nightly I pray the gods that it may soon be that she comes to me again."

"Rula would come to you even now did you permit it," Eric said, gravely; "she frets much over you."

"Tell her for me that the time will be soon," Fedalm said, "and to have patience, for I would not have her come just yet."

But as Seumas and Eric walked away

together, Eric told him that the old woman was in a sweat of fear for her child.

"Nightly she dreams," he said, "and awakening, cries out, so that the women near her must go to her, and her dream is always the same—that Fedalm is near to some great danger."

Seumas shook his head.

"Doubtless it is because the good old woman is parted from her foster-child, whom she so loves," he said. "All will be well when they are again together."

"Doubtless," Eric agreed, but he looked sidewise, in the darkness, for there was part of Rula's dream which he had not told him.

After the great gate had softly closed upon Eric, and he had begun making his way homeward along the faint trail which none could have followed unless they had traveled it many times, Eric suddenly stopped, slipped behind a tree, and peered cautiously out, loosening his dagger from his belt, for he had seen that something moved, ever so slightly in the path beyond him. And then, very, very low, there came a whisper—

"Eric?"

He knew the voice, repressed as it was, and at once stepped out.

"By the gods, cousin," he laughed, "you gave me some alarm, for I thought that perhaps some Pict had at last seen that I go out often at night."

"Nay, 'tis only I," the other replied, and then, in silence, he turned and led the way along, until there was a more open space, and there he stepped beside Eric and said:

"How is she? Looks she well—and happy?"

Now, the lad had never spoken in such a way before and Eric peered at him in the darkness with surprise, but he answered at once:

"Our princess looks more beautiful than ever and her eyes are pools of delight. Greatly is she beloved among the Mac-Dubhas, cousin. It will be no trouble to make us all a united kingdom under her hand and that of her good and brave young lord."

"Aye."

The answer came with a sigh, and again Eric looked at his young kinsmen. He had

known for long that he had loved Fedalm, but he had hoped much from his youth, and from such healing as other love could give, for he was comely, and many a maiden smiled upon him. But of late he had been more grave than any youth should be, and his cheek more lean than befitted one of his years.

"Spoke you to Angus of that which troubles Rula?" the lad asked, after a long silence.

"Aye," Eric said, "and he shamed me for my weakness in ascribing aught to it, by his clear thought. And as for what concerns him, in the old woman's dream, I said naught. 'Tis only, as he said, that she grieves for her child and so is disturbed in her sleep."

"Last night she dreamed also of me, and that I lay dead beside Seumas," the lad said.

Eric stopped and impatiently shook the youth by his shoulder.

"Put such old woman's chatter from your mind!" he commanded, sternly. "In truth, 'tis not what a brave man should listen to——"

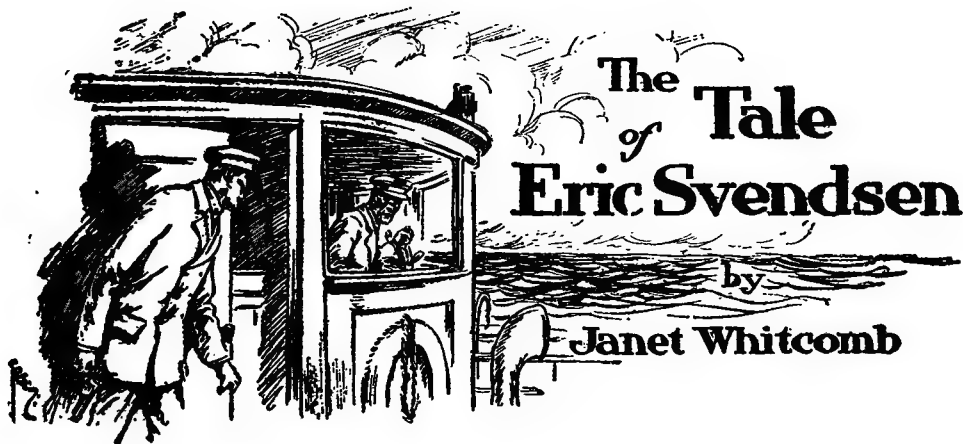
"Think you that I am afeared, Eric?" the boy asked. "It is not so. Rather would I be glad did I know that I might soon go to the Land of No Return, for my heart is heavy and I have no joy in life. But I would not die until I shall have fitly served her who is the ruler of me, in love as in duty."

Now, he had always been a good lad, and he was as a son to Eric, for he had lost his parents when very young, and had grown up at Eric's knee; and Eric's eyes misted over, for sorrow and pity of him, for his voice was full of suffering.

"Nay, nay, good lad," he said, as he threw an arm around the broad young shoulders, "talk not of dying while you have but begun to live! The gods send you surcease of pain, and give you, one day, a maiden whose hand will ease your heart."

The lad answered naught, but moved onward, looking before him, like one who walks in his sleep, and a chill of terror crept upon the hard-headed Eric, so that he seemed to feel the very presence of the feet of the dark gods of death upon his heels.

TO BE CONCLUDED



ERIC SVENDSEN told me this story, just as it stands, without embellishments, save that I have set it down as an unbroken narrative, whereas it took all day in the telling, with many interruptions. For he began it on the ride to Macau, proceeding through a lunch at the Bonavista, continued it at intervals throughout the visit to the opium factory and during the excursion to Camoens' Grotto, concluding at Hongkong late that same evening. I have added no word to it, nor taken away any save a few lurid seaman's oaths which interlarded the recital.

Eric is, as are most of those who go down to the sea in ships, a laconic sort of chap, usually; but I think our inspection of the opium factory spurred his memory and buttered his tongue. This, you must remember, happened a few years back, when the production and consumption of the insidious poppy product was an open and legitimate part of Chinese activities.

"No," said Eric Svendsen, in answer to a question. "Thank you; but I'm not likely to change—and I'd be small use on shore, I fancy. Once a sailor, always a sailor, 'tis said. And that's true in the main. I been following the sea upward o' thirty year, and I've no thought but to stick by her till she does for me, or till my body is unseaworthy from age. Fourteen, I was, when first I come to her, and a greenhorn.

"Eh, man, yes! I see myself, mind you, as I was then—a tow-headed runt all freckles and stary eyes, frightened most to death o' the cap'n, but right at home,

first off, on deck and in the rigging; come by it natural, I did. All the Svendsens have been seafaring folk for as long as memory or tradition serves. We've a legend amongst us that there was one of us that sailed with Kerl Jerge that time he fetched up America, long afore Columbus. Maybe so. Who knows the rights o' what happened that long ago? Anyway, salt's in the blood of us, we say.

"Adventures? Well, man, that's how you regard the word. Bound to be a few, in thirty year, from a landsman's viewpoint, I reckon. All of life is adventure when you come to think of it, now, and we all get a share, one way or t'other."

He was silent here, swaying and giving easily to the motion of the 'riksha, which was jolting me unmercifully.

"But that opium, now—it's queer stuff, to a sailor! Strange, ain't it, how it gets under the skin o' some men—white men, too! But precious few sailors, I fancy. It don't jibe with salt water and clean air blowing free, the drug don't. But when it does get a grip on a white man it does for him worse than for a brown one; and some of the yellow, now, they seem to thrive on it, don't they? But it's death by slow poison to a white, and the better the man the harder hit he is.

"There was Oliphant, now—my first master, when I run off to sea, though it hadn't got him then—he was as fine a man as you'd meet in a month o' Sundays. A big, breezy fellow, competent to the core, strict in discipline but kindly at heart, and a man filled with sea-dreams—introspective, the book-writers call it.

"A talk with him was more interesting than a day's shore leave, and it was his example and encouragement that set me studying navigation; he helped me a heap—and me just a happen-chance cabin boy! He used to say, 'There's nothing in the sea for a foremast hand, Eric; you got to master the art o' sailing the ship and managing the men—then you can think about ambition!'

"I wasn't nineteen when I passed my first exams and, being a big lad with what you might call a mature manner, they didn't raise no question of my age, but give me my papers as mate. And my second berth was under old Oliphant again, as it happened—second mate I was, on the *Star o' Kashmir*, a tramp out of Calcutta to anywhere trade called. We was in the coolie carrying line back then—eh, man, no sweet picnic, that! Yellow coolies from the Yellow Sea to Ceylon, and black ones from the Irriwaddy out to Trinidad and Jamaica for the sugar and asphalt works—powerful timid o' the sea, those poor critturs are, and seasick all the time—ugh! A cattle-boat'd have been pleasanter and cleaner!

"And that first long roll to the Indies taught me a thing or two about Cap'n Oliphant and the change that had come over him. Not that he had no bad habit by then—only the habit o' brooding and worrying. The sea gets some men that way. A grand, good man he had been, in his day. But though he wasn't an old man in years, his day was drawing to twilight. He shouldn't have been a seaman. No, sir! Not he! Too lonesome-like.

"There's men that need solitude, and wide spaces about 'em; cities—for more than a week or so—stifle 'em! And then there's men that need their own kind herding close and that like the noise and bustle, and the women all about—that was Oliphant. Long runs, they got on his nerves, and he got to brooding—poor body! He'd have done fine ashore, nor aged so fast, I'm thinking.

"For that matter, he'd done well on the sea for years, till along about this time I'm telling, he was petering out; he wasn't but forty-eight or so, but he looked—and spoke—like a man o' sixty odd, like a tired, disappointed old body, gone sour on the world—but a kindly one to his men; aye,

too kind—they said his owners were dissatisfied with him along of his being so easy-going. Must have been some truth to it, for he'd come down a peg or two, from a smart passenger liner to a coolie-carrier. But me—I was young, and it was a step up to find myself mate under the very man I'd served as boy five years ago.

"As I said, I saw first off he wasn't the man he'd been. He'd been a crackerjack master in the old days, no mistake about that—but now he was—what's that name for it—vacillating. Yes. He couldn't seem to handle himself, though—he could handle a ship as well as ever, but Lord, where it had once come natural-like, it seemed to come with constant effort now. Couldn't give the simplest order without clearing his throat and bracing himself as for a tussle.

"He used to wander about the deck aimless-like, brooding under his thick gray eyebrows that was always frowning, like a man who sees only his interior; he'd stumble over things, and if you spoke sudden he'd flinch a wee bit—as though his soul gave a jump inside him, though his muscles held rigid. And sometimes he'd laugh and pound you on the back hearty, like he was thankful for the interruption to his thoughts; but sometimes he'd scowl and answer short and sour, rebuking you for presuming to intrude. You couldn't dislike him for all his whimsies—he was too forlorn to hate.

"The old *Star o' Kashmir* was a slow tub, but a solid safe hulk that had been built by men who knew the sea and her terrible needs, and had put faithful labor and stanch timber into her. Barring her speed, she was one of the best craft ever floated. Oliphant used to say he'd outride a typhoon in Hades itself with her planks under him, unafraid.

"But she sure was a plodder; you couldn't hurry the old girl, and it's a long, long way from India around Africa and up to the Indies. We didn't cut through Suez because we usually had a heap of cargo for Capetown that helped pay our way, and those poor heathen coolies—what did anybody care how long they were penned up at sea or how homesick and seasick they were? They ain't taking coolies there these days, and that's one mercy, anyhow. I ain't a soft man, but my heart used to

sicken over 'em. They're a somber race, and they sure do get powerful homesick. Some of 'em died on the way, from no other mortal cause, far as we could discover. We had a clean bill of health, and they had exceptionally comfortable quarters, no more crowding and a heap better food than they'd had at home, I'll wager. But a plenty died.



"OUR first mate had been ailing all along, too. He stood up to his work, for he was a faithful old Scot, bred to the sea and loving her. But down Madagascar way, he up and died sudden on us. Cap'n Oliphant, who knew a heap, said he'd had a cancer. He sure had something that was mighty painful, and I was glad for his sake to see him plunk overboard in canvas at last, free from his misery, although it dumped extra duty on me.

"It meant, really, that Oliphant and I doubled up on his work, for we couldn't find a mate free in Capetown able to satisfy the old man's ideas of what a mate should be. He was particular, was Oliphant, for all his flighty ways. He used to say that no mate could harness up with him that wasn't a thoroughbred gentleman as well as a top-notch navigator.

"Well," I says to him, "I'm no lily-handed aristocrat, Cap'n."

"No," says he, "you're a rough diamond, Eric. But the core of you is sound and you're young; besides, I'm used to you now. But I'd take it kindly if you'd put in a bit of your leisure studying; I could help you some, say, in French and mathematics—and a bit Latin. Things you never come by through not going long to school."

"I thanked him, and we laid out a course of study in languages, but it didn't progress very steady, along o' my not having much leisure from then on. He wasn't the best o' teachers, either, having become kind of rambly in his bearings. That shows how he'd changed, for when he was first helping me with navigation, his mind was like a steel spring, resilient and powerful, and a half-hour under him then was worth a week of him as he was now. He'd grown kind of dependent on me, too, but I saw less and less of him after the mate kicked off, for I had to stand most of his watches, and when the cap'n took 'em, I had to catch up on sleep.

"That was a funny thing about Oliphant—the sleeping business. Times, he didn't seem to need no sleep whatever. I've known him to go a week with, so far as I could see, just an occasional cat-nap. Never undressing and getting into his berth, but just, from time to time, dropping his head down on a table or against a chair back, and snoozing perhaps ten minutes at a stretch, so light that a puff of wind'd wake him easy. And then again, he'd be powerful sleepy for a week at a stretch and there'd be no dragging him out o' his berth—and he'd go to sleep on his feet if you did. I'd be on the bridge then till my eyes were gummed together, and I'd have to put peas in my shoes to keep me awake till he'd come to and relieve me.

"I spoke out to him at last, etiquette or no, mighty plain; and he took it meek as Moses.

"I had the sleeping sickness once," he told me, 'and it left something in my blood I can't get over. There's times I've got to sleep a lot; and times I can't sleep, though I'd give a fortune so to do.

"And, indeed, that was Gospel truth. He wasn't fit for service; more than once I'd come up to relieve him and find him sleeping on his feet, for all his eyes were open, they were useless—he'd look right through me, vacant and unseeing, and I'd have to shake him and holler at him before he'd pull himself enough awake to get down off the bridge.

"Fine work, eh, and upward a thousand poor souls in his keeping! It got so I felt like I was the one that was responsible for the ship, and I had a tough time of it, what with his whims—for he'd be peevish and irritable after I'd caught him in bad shape—and the strain of it, I began to think we'd never raise Trinidad. It seemed like we'd been years on untold years on that trip—I got as homesick, most, as the coolies 'tween decks. Trouble acts different on different men; it softens me up inside and puts a hard crust on top. I was mighty strict on discipline those days, but I took it on myself to order a lot of little extra comforts and indulgences to our human cargo that wasn't really my business.

"But for that matter—and I'm not swanking, you know—I was virtually captain that trip, got so the men looked to me for 'most everything, in a furtive way.

I almost got it in my head that we never would make port—that we was doomed to go on like that for eternity, and we might as well make the poor creatures as comfortable, humanly speaking, as we could.

"But there came a day when we raised the South American coast, and in fourteen more hours we were off the green palms of Trinidad, and life slipped back into normal grooves, and all was bustle and hustle to deliver our cargo, like so many bales of goods, to the pitch-lake people. Cap'n Oliphant braced up—maybe it was the excitement of getting ashore—he was always powerful fond of shore life—and he went up to the hotel or the planters' club evenings and renewed an acquaintance with a handsome creole woman, and generally blossomed out. You'd never have known him for the same man of the cruise, so spry, so spick-and-span he was.

"We had the luck, too—or so it seemed then—to pick up a first-class mate. He'd been wrecked just previously, and was glad of a berth. His papers were O. K., and he was a superior chap to talk with. Cap'n Oliphant cottoned to him first off, and sung his praises to the skies. I was willing enough to second 'em, for Stevens was a well-bred chap, smooth-spoken, clean as the English always are, and with good table manners. And, believe me, when you've got to eat with a man month in and month out at sea, and no passengers to hold him up to a standard, that's a mighty important item. A man can be as patient as Job and as righteous as Paul, but if he mishandles his knife and is noisy over his soup, or wears doubtful collars, you get to loathe him worse than a murderer.

"Still and all, I'd have welcomed a convict to help stand those interminable watches and break the monotony of Oliphant's queernesses, I was that worn. So Stevens got a mighty cordial reception and made himself right to home—we had awful nice, roomy cabins to ourselves; the *Star o' Kashmir* had been built for passenger trade, and there was room and to spare for us all and considerable luxury.

"We'd laid in a plenty of fruits and coconuts, and a chicken-house with three dozen fowl, and we carried a cow for the milk; so we were well stocked and, one broiling morning—and say, it can broil you to a turn off Trinidad—we steams

out, all hunky-dory, Oliphant in his best white ducks on the bridge, a perfect picture of what a master should be.

"Eh, man, but did you ever stop to think of that—the tragedy that a man's fine figure can cover? The dry rot of the soul—it doesn't show till all the nature's disintegrated. There was Oliphant, now, and Stevens—neither one fit to have charge of anything, not even themselves! But I'll wager not one who saw us as we stood out that morning but thought, 'There goes a lucky ship!'

"We were traveling high and light, no passengers and hardly enough cargo to pay our way, though we had some mahogany timber stowed. And all went smooth as butter for a while. But I didn't like our mate, for all his good manners and his conciliatory ways. We had three China boys to serve us—we were well fixed those ways—and he kept his boy busy laundering those everlasting white ducks, same as if we were carrying passengers.

"Looked nice, at that. But I've always held that, 'way off in the trackless path, clean flannel and stout serge is good enough for any mate save, maybe, on a Sunday or a day in port. Maybe I was, as Oliphant teased, a mite jealous of our Beau Brummel—that's what Oliphant nicknamed Stevens, whatever it means; a dandy, I suppose. Maybe I was jealous at that. Oliphant making such a pet cat of him; but I don't think that was it. No. It was just that I didn't trust him, not 'round the wheelhouse corner.

"He didn't drink—not enough to hurt, anyway; and his certificates were above question; oh, he knew his trade, all right. He could've been a captain himself, I should have thought, with his education and address. There wasn't a doubt that he was gentle-born, and he could cap Oliphant's Latin quotations neatly; Spanish and French too. But there was something wrong with him. I don't often take those dislikes, either. But I'd flinch away from his touch like he was a leper. Instinctive. I couldn't help myself.

"Oliphant, as I said, had taken an exceptional fancy to him. They hobnobbed together like brothers. They were both clever chess players, and they spent the greater part of their off time in that innocent diversion. I always had a sense of respite when I saw them like that,

normal and friendly, and above-board, as it were. I don't know what I was afraid of, anyway. But when they were out of sight, I was uneasy, as though I sensed mischief brewing.

"Yes, I was more uneasy than I'd been on the out-run and though Stevens had eased up my work, I was just as much under strain. I'd never felt antagonistic to Oliphant, you know, only mighty sorry for him and kind of responsible for him. I take it that it isn't the drug itself that we hate in a man who has the habit; but when it fastens on a bad man, and releases the evil he'd normally keep in check, then we hate it something as people hated the evil in *Hyde*—remember Stevenson's story—and how everybody instinctively shrunk from the creature?

"That was an awful true thing—and that was something like the way I felt about Stevens. I tell you, if his arm brushed my coat unintentionally, my flesh crawled and withered! How Oliphant could stand contact with him, let alone liking him so well, beat me. Yes—mischief brewing! I felt it—and you can't argue with such strong premonitions; not successfully, that is. Though you can make yourself go along as usual, as if nothing was wrong.



"ABOUT this time I began to notice something I was accustomed enough to when we were carrying coolies—especially Chinese—but which was unusual when we were free of them—that is, the odor of cooking opium! Any one that's ever scented that cloying-sweet, sickish smell, all-pervading and long-lasting, can't be mistaken in it. We had Chinese and Malays in our crew, of course. But they well knew that indulgence, save on shore leave, was prohibited. I reported the matter to Cap'n Oliphant, as was my duty, and thought no more of it.

"In the old days, he'd have had it stopped in a jiffy. But it kept on. And I couldn't locate it. Powerful as the smell is, it's very insidious and elusive, especially in the open air. I'd smell it, sometimes, and hop down to the fore-castle sharp—but nothing doing there; and I'd pop in the galley, for we had a Chink cook, and find him burnishing his pots, or searching his pig-tail for lice—his favorite occupation. Sounds nasty, but he was really very clean.

"All told, I couldn't locate it. I was responsible for the fore-castle, but it wasn't my duty to ferret out the offenders in the cabin. That was up to Stevens. But Stevens, when I tackled him, gave me a stare out of his cold, slatey eyes, and claimed he'd never smelt a thing. And Oliphant was relaxing discipline more and more, slowly but surely. Once, he'd have sworn the tar out of the deck-planks with his smoking tongue and sent me after the offenders with a cat-o'-nine-tails, so to speak. Now he merely shook his head fretfully.

"I don't notice it,' he said, not meeting my eyes, 'nor does Stevens; you've got an over-acute nose, Eric. And maybe you imagine it. For that matter, Chinks cook queer stuff sometimes that ain't anything to do with opium.'

"It's the cabin boys,' I told him. 'They don't smoke in the fore-castle. I see to that! I've been laying for them, but it ain't there; it's in the cabin.'

"He flushed an ugly dark red, and flinched, like I'd stuck a pin in him.

"Let be, let be,' he said irritably. 'That's not in your duty. And God knows it's a weary enough life at sea. If the poor heathen boys has the habit—and it don't interfere with their work—go easy on 'em. Not that I believe it,' he added hastily. 'I've never scented a thing out of the way.'

"I was dumfounded at such slackness, but I could only obey. And I'm bound to admit it didn't interfere with their work—they were smart, active lads and I watched 'em like a hawk, but no fault could I find with 'em, and Stevens surely did keep 'em busy, what with constant laundering—he had the table-cloth changed daily, and fresh napkins to every meal, and the silver kept shined like for a dinner party ashore. And the glasses were polished till it was a wonder they didn't wear out! Besides his own things—I've seen six suits of pajamas swinging from the wash-line in a row, and he changed his underwear daily. It kept the boys humping, I can tell you.

"Well, in course of time, I located the smoker, all right. I'd suspected all along, but I wouldn't hang a yellow dog on suspicion, so I'd not accused him even to myself till I got the goods on him. But I caught the culprit—and say what you will, the man who deliberately stupefies his God-given senses at sea, where he may need 'em

in a pinch any minute, is culpable. Of course, you've guessed it was Stevens. And there was nothing I could do about it; he ranked me, you know. I couldn't tattle-tale even if I wanted to, and he performed his duties well enough, in a perfunctory manner. We hadn't had hardly a blow, so he hadn't been tested out, but he seemed capable enough.

"And that's a funny thing about the black smoke, ain't it—a man can be its slave for years and, except for the moments he's actually drugged, he goes on just the same—but take it away from him, or put him in some keen emergency—than the flaw comes out—and he founders.

"I made up my mind that, if I had to go back before the mast, I'd get out of that boat, once safe back in Calcutta. It was plain that Oliphant with his sleeping-sickness and shattered nerve, and Stevens with his drug, would never part company if they could help it—and they weren't, as things were turning out, a fit pair to have charge of a junk.

"There isn't much to tell about that run, though. We had almost unbroken smooth weather, a child could have conned the ship in such easy going, and the few squalls we struck were child's play to the good old *Star o' Kashmir*. She almost sailed herself, the stanch old lady, and it wouldn't have mattered if there hadn't been an officer on the bridge.

"But on the homeward stretch Oliphant developed a fresh restlessness, a fretful nervousness that was very wearing. He quarreled even with his pet Stevens, and he was ugly—for the first time—with the men. He seemed in a perfect fever to get on—as though he'd like to jump overboard and push the wallowing old hulk with his puny strength—you've seen men on trains, perhaps going to a sick bed or a reunion, act like that?

"Well, imagine Oliphant, strung taut like a wire, not for an hour or a day, but week on end! And his stomach went back on him, too; he'd got so he could hardly eat a thing, and the merest mouthful of chow was apt to come up again. Poor soul, he was in a sad way! If you come up behind him now, or spoke sudden, the start he'd give wasn't just a thing you sensed, any more—it was physical enough to almost bowl him over. And he'd swear—eh, Lord, but he'd blister your ears, he that

had always been so gentlemanlike and kindly!

"'You can curse my soul to hell, but that doesn't mean it'll go there,' I says to him once. For even a Chink would've resented his abuse. And he burst out screaming at me:

"'You mean that's where mine'll go!' And then he laughed—a dreary, forlorn sort of laugh. 'Eh, lad, but it's there already!' he says in a dry whisper, fingering my coat sleeve with fingers that was little thicker than claws, so thin he'd got.

"But what he'd say to me was mother's milk to the vitriol he'd pour out on Stevens, who'd been so dear to him! I figured it out by degrees—I had time enough to ponder in, God knows! And I made it out that Oliphant'd got so bad that he'd taken to the poppy smoke too—perhaps to ease pain. He sure was far from well. And now he'd run out of it—and Stevens hadn't, but wouldn't share with him.

"So, of course, he hated him. He took, too, to prowling about among the men, furtively trying to find any that might have a secret store of the stuff, but without success—whatever they might have had had been used up, probably; or they were afraid to admit it if they still had a pinch—he got pretty desperate about this time.

"I heard a fearful quarrel in the chart-house one night where they were trying to play chess, but spitting and growling at each other like mongrel dogs with their tails tied together. I heard Stevens complaining that he'd been sneaking through his boxes and Oliphant was wrathful in his denial. All the same, I believe he'd put one of the boys up to it. It's wonderful what they'll sink to to get hold of the stuff when they crave it!

"But that night they patched up a kind of truce, and Stevens must have doled out a mite to him. He was crafty, Stevens was. He knew he had a soft berth with Oliphant, and he didn't want to anger him to the point where he'd be set loose to seek a new berth in Calcutta, with, doubtless, a stricter master. So he gave up enough to keep the peace, and Oliphant became—so the stuff works—almost normal and rational again.

"I found out afterwards that the black smoke wasn't his particular habit—he depended chiefly on cocaine. But he'd run out of that long since, through his

having used so much more than usual on the out-run and not being able to stock up in Trinidad. I suppose the opium helped him over, but it didn't agree with him as it seemed to with Stevens who, except for periodical bouts when he kept to his berth, went on as well as ever.



"WELL, that's how things stood when we struck into the homeward stretch; and, beating up the Indian Ocean, came a time when we needed all hands and needed 'em bad, and Stevens had chosen that time for indulgence. You know what a typhoon is—what it can do! Well, we had the real thing, a healthy, full-grown one, lusty as the devil and as wicked; and we came through—yes, sir. The typhoon wasn't hatched in hell that could sink the *Star o' Kashmir*. But it was a close shave, and it had us on the jump for a while.

"Oliphant rose to the emergency like a hero. Seems he'd been keeping one last powder of cocaine, as a starving man might hoard his last crust, for a supreme pang. And when he saw that mountain of solid water forming, lying taut and straight, like a stretched line above the gun'le, he up and swallowed it, paper and all, in his hurry.

"And in the next twenty minutes he performed prodigies of valor, and his orders rang out above the howling of the gale. We were lashed to the bridge—anybody not secured went overboard—and we pulled her through. And I tell you, drug or no drug, I was proud of Oliphant that day, proud and glad to serve under such a master! Eh, man, but why is it those habits so often fasten on the best of men?

"Toward sundown—not that there was any sun shining to go by—we outran the last of it. We found ourselves in a circle of almost placid water, and all hands drew a breath of relief. I went up to Oliphant—he'd been silent for a while, the need of action being passed—and he was slumped over his rope like he'd fallen into his sleeping sickness.

"'It's over, sir,' I said; 'wake up! It's over, and you've done fine!'

"I'll never forget the look he gave me—opening his eyelids as by a prodigious effort, and peering up at me with an anxious, intent, beseeching scrutiny as I unlashed him.

"'Have I?' he asked, wonderingly, pathetically, like a child begging approbation.

'Have I now, Eric? I don't remember much about it. It dazed me, I reckon.'

"'Why,' says I, 'you were great! Your old form, sir.'

"He was pleased, but he winced, too.

"'Eh, call Ling to help me down. I'm stiff,' says he. And Ling supported him below.

"Course he was stiff, standing lashed to the rail twelve hours! And the power of the drug was gone, and he could hardly shuffle one foot before t'other.

"The strain had been too much for him. In two minutes Ling was calling me, and when I went down to his berth he was passing quick; heart, I reckon—he was panting, and his lips were blue.

"'You take the ship, Eric,' he says. 'Call in the crew; I'll put her in your hands. Stevens, the mongrel—he ain't fit—no more fit than I was—'

"But by the time Ling had called in the men, he was beyond talking. He died quite peaceable, all but the striving after breath. And now, thought I, things would be harder yet, for Stevens, of course, was master, and must be obeyed, be he ever so unworthy. And I was filled, too, with the pity and sorrow of Oliphant's going. Better so, I knew, before he'd sunk lower in the profession—lost a craft, mayhap, and his good name. But he'd been kind to me, and now that he was gone I took to remembering him as he'd been when first I served under him—a grand man then and never a wicked one, even at the end. Then I'd looked out for him of late, he'd been so helpless, so dependent on me. I'd felt responsible—and if a man's got a heart that endears a creature to him, be it dog, child or man.

"Well, Stevens was easy enough to serve under—he kept largely to his berth, standing most of his watches but not all, and invisible in betwixt. The smell of cooking opium permeated to us pretty steadily—he didn't have to share with Oliphant now, and we were on the homeward stretch, with Calcutta, a paradise for the opium smoker in those days, drawing nearer. He wasn't worrying!



"ODD, isn't it, the tricks nature plays on us sometimes? It was on the third day after the typhoon, and we were wallowing placidly along a calm and desolate stretch—hadn't sighted

a sail nor so much as a distant trail of smoke—when a hail was raised—‘Boat ahoy!’ Sure enough, we all could make it out presently; a frail, tiny thing bobbing like a cork on the horizon—and flying a pitiful makeshift rag of fluttering white which, even as I brought the binoculars to bear, was seen to wave frantically.

“There’s something very touching, very forlorn in such a sight. Bad enough to be adrift near a shore. But in the midst of the Indian Ocean—grrr! We overhauled her shortly, and made her out to be a lifeboat so small that even her load of seven people seemed to cram her over-full. Two women, too—think of it! And not a drop o’ water left. Still, we’d found ’em in good time. They’d not begun to suffer yet; seems their bark had gone down in that same typhoon we’d weathered. When we’d put ’em to bed with warm milk from our cow in their raw stomachs and they’d had a nap they were all right, and very thankful and talkative about it.

“But when the women come up on deck, the younger one—nothing but a girl, she was, she’d never yet seen twenty, that’s certain—she raised a howl first off, and run up the bridge to where Stevens, a mite shaky on his pins but very smartly turned out, was showing off, and she caught him by the arm, the way a very earnest young woman what has always had her own way would be likely to, cap’n or no. She was pretty, too—pretty as a picture! So Stevens didn’t mind. But when he’d listened a moment, the smug smile died off’n his thin lips. And presently he signaled me to come alongside, and I found out what was the matter.

“Seems there’d been two other boats launched from the sinking bark, one of which had weathered the storm and kept near the one we’d rescued for a day. The girl figured they was just forty-eight hours off, and, naturally enough, she wanted us to turn back and find her!

“Well, it’s hard to calculate just where she might have drifted to in those hours. A needle in a haystack’s got nothing on a small boat adrift in the Indian Ocean, and, look at it one way, Stevens had a mite of excuse in being reluctant to undertake the search. But look at it as a plain human proposition, that’s what he had to do.

“Figure to yourself if you’d been in that

little boat—eh? And we weren’t mail-carriers with a Government contract to meet and a schedule to live up to. No. We could very well spare a week to cruise around on the chance of picking up one—or both—boats. We’d have nothing but approbation from our owners, and that I told Stevens who, being new, didn’t know the firm.

“Well, he was shaken—the girl was powerful persistent—came out later that her sweetheart was in one o’ those boats—and very appealing in her tears. My, it takes a pretty girl to look pretty when she’s bawling in earnest, don’t it? I don’t mind saying I was all for going back over our course, and I said all I could and a bit more than I had any right. I take it there’s occasions when it’s more important to be a man than an officer. I wasn’t afraid of that opium-soaked waster, anyway.

“He give in, too, after three hours of argument, and his order set us about face, while the crew and the shipwrecked handful set up a hearty cheer. The rest of that day we retraced our way, with every soul aboard keeping a lookout, and setting off a gun now and again in the hope they’d hear us and pull in our direction. And all that night we went back, a setting off flares, but with never a living craft sighted.

“Twenty-four hours—it ain’t so much to spend on the chance of saving a dozen and a half of lives. But it was all Stevens could spend; I found him at noon shaky beyond anything I’d yet seen, and ugly in temper. He daren’t smoke and lay off duty before these strangers—or else his supply was lower than I’d thought—anyway, he snarled at me like a panther with a boil on his lip, and cursed me to perdition. And, all told, he reversed his orders—and the ship’s direction—and we was headed for Calcutta within the hour.

“A big, cumbersome ship goes about slowly, and we made a fair circle of it. The crew sensed the change, but not the landlubbers. But I reckon my glum face—for I felt fair sore about it—gave the show away, for little Miss Elsie—that was her name—come up to me, and says she—

“‘Do you think we’ll find ’em today?’

“And I says, not stopping to think—

“‘Not unless you can soften Cap’n

Stevens' heart again, miss. We're headed Calcutta way this minute.'

"She dropped down in a chair, hiding her face in her arms at that, and I never want to hear a woman cry like that again, nor watch her body wrenching with the sobs. But then she sprung up, and shook the hair out of her drenched eyes, and went flying off to the cabin.

"'Twas no matter o' use, though. Stevens had bolted himself in his state-room, and he wouldn't answer her, let alone listening to her prayers. I found her there a half-hour later, crouching against the panels of his door, pleading fit to melt the heart of a heathen idol. But all for nothing. He'd got his pill cooked by then, you could smell it plain, and he was beyond the reach of a human touch. And that's the most devilish part of the black smoke, I think. Even a very drunk man would've heard and been touched by that girl, I tell you. But not that blighter.

"And finally I got it through her head that she was only wasting her breath. I carried her up to the deck, and says she—

"'But you're in charge now—you can turn back!'

"Well, of course, I must've seemed one awful coward to her! What could that kid know of the limits of a mate's jurisdiction? Outside the army and navy, there's no profession where discipline's so strict, and by jinks the master of a ship is master of every living soul aboard! I sensed well enough that Stevens could break me for life—and would, too—if I meddled with the course he'd set, and I conned the ship along, slow as I dared, and all that day I was wrestling with myself—my duty as a sailor set against my duty as a plain human—and all that day that girl, who stood in awe of no authority and invaded the bridge at will, kept pleading with me, coaxing, and scornful, and heart-broke by turns till I was 'most as groggy in my mind as Stevens was below with his smoke-pipe.

"Come dinner hour and the dark falling swift as a plummet the way it does out of a tropic sky, and Stevens, suave and smiling again after his afternoon's dose, which seemed to revive his smooth temper, come up to relieve me. We didn't have no words this time. I'd had my say for the poor castaways before—and I goes on down. But I couldn't swallow a mouthful o' dinner, good as the mess was that

Ling set before me. He saw I was troubled, Ling did. That was the boy, you remember, that had helped the captain die. And, heathen that he was, the good Lord used him as His instrument. For Ling, leaning above me to fill my glass, he says soft:

"'Captin lef' ship in your charge. Me hear him so do.'

"And I was so low in my mind that I didn't resent it, but says I, simple:

"'Aye, Ling, but we got no witnesses. He died too soon.'

"Says Ling, real earnest:

"'You gottee plenty witness'. Evely China boy, evely man of crew, they stick up for you. You savee life.'

"He meant it, too! Nine out o' ten o' the whole bunch was stanch to stand by me, even to perjury! I tell you, it heartened a man! It give me back my faith—humanity, in the concrete, averages up on the side o' righteousness, and snaps the net of red tape every time!

"'Savee life, eh, Ling? That's the real issue!' says I.

"'You betchee me life!' agrees Ling.

"And he lays beside the fork I'd dropped, Oliphant's gun—clean and primed. He'd sneaked it out o' his boxes, I suppose, though Stevens had made a show of sealing everything up ship-shape. Maybe Oliphant had give it to him, though, he'd been rather fond of Ling, who had a yellow skin but a white heart.



"SO I comes up to the bridge, though I wasn't due, and I comes up heeled. It was like a typhoon had raged in my soul, but I'd weathered it, and now I was dead calm, and I knew what I was going to do. Yes, sir, I was going to save life, though I lost my own doing it. And no opium-soaked waster was going to stop me, rank or no. He must've seen a new purpose in me—or sensed it, for the bridge was meagerly lighted. And I wasted no time.

"'I reckon,' says I, 'that longitude so-an'-so by such-an'-such will about meet our requirements. Will you give the order, or shall I?'

"He give me one insolent look—and believe me, he took in the gun in my hand.

"'This is gross mutiny,' he begins, but I says:

"'Yep. But you'll never prove it. The men are with me solid in this.'

"So?" says he. "Then give your own orders. And meantime I'll log you. But we'll see what we'll see in Calcutta."

"I sung out orders, and then I says, calm:

"We'll see, sir—but I'm powerful afraid you won't live to reach Calcutta unless you agree to back me up in this rescue. The men are in an ugly mood—you're none too popular, and the Chinks are handy men with native poisons. I'm afraid you're due for sudden cholera and a burial at sea unless you prove amenable to reason."

"Murder, eh?" he sneers.

"Not by me. I'm but warning you fair an' square," says I. "I'd not foul my hands with your blood—it's too much mixed with the black smoke."

"That shot told! They're ashamed, smokers are, among the normal, however unashamed they may be among themselves. He glowered a bit, and then he says, slick:

"I'd intended to put back anyway. Only my sense of duty to the owners prevented me from it. But life is life."

"Aye!" says I. "Most 'specially when it's your own life that's at stake!"

"Well, in twelve hours we'd picked up a boat jammed with the sickest lot of men you ever saw. Two of 'em died from sunstroke 'fore we reached port, and one was raving crazy; he'd drunk salt water, spite of all the others could do. Nine of 'em pulled through O. K. and one of those was that girl's sweetheart—a fine upstanding chap.

"Lord, but she was the joyful one! Knelt down and tried to kiss my hands, she did—awful embarrassin', right in public! I wouldn't 'a' minded kissing her, and not on the hands neither, if I'd had the proper opportunity! Though I was much too shy o' women in those days to have told her so! Say, if that chap hadn't 'a' been

saved, maybe—oh, —, what's the use o' talking about her? They was married in Bombay two weeks after, an' I was made much of as a most 'special guest.

"Oh, Stevens? No, he never made me no trouble. He was scared of Ling and the crew, and when it come to landing those survivors, he was kinda' proud o' himself. Found he enjoyed being hailed as a life-saver. Our owners, they was good men, and congratulated him on it. But they didn't give him another berth—didn't take 'em long to sift out his vapors and mark him for a queer 'un. I heard he got a charge later—and cast her away on the Tonga reefs. Maybe so—or maybe it was another of his name which isn't so uncommon. Anyway, he died in hospital up Agra way about two years later, seeing ghosts an' dragons an' things, and cutting up pretty rough, I've been told."



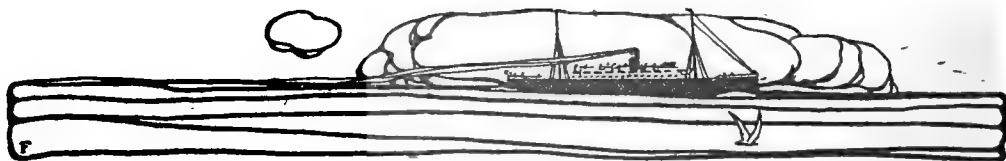
ERIC SVENDSEN pushed back from the table—we'd landed at the day's end at a hotel in Hong-Kong—and lighted his cigar with a little sigh of pure enjoyment.

"It don't pay," he finished soberly. "The black smoke—it don't give a man a run for his money. But a good man—like Oliphant—he stays good in the main—hurts only himself; while a bad one—and Stevens had always been a rotter—he gets wickeder under it. There'll come a time," said Eric Svendsen, a mystic light in his blue-gray eyes, "when the Governments will wake up to the peril of opium and prohibit it—even in this Flowery Kingdom."

"Not in our time, Eric," said I; for I thought I knew China.

"Aye, sir, in our time, likely," said Eric Svendsen, positively.

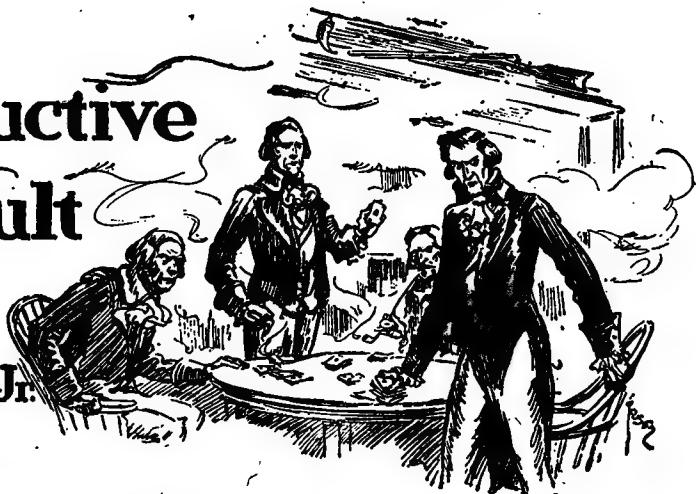
And therein Eric proved the truer prophet.



The Constructive Insult

by

Eugene P. Lyle, Jr.



Author of "A Dash of Irish," "The Great Foolishness," etc.

IF YOU require a scene portraying gentlemen of roughly a hundred years ago at their evening amusement in St. Louis, Territory of Louisiana, it would be about no bridge-table in a snug corner of an exclusive club where rugs are thick, laughter soft-pedaled, and atmosphere redolent of restful decorum. You resolve to commit no anachronism, wherefore the great granddaddies of the bridge-players will be "discovered" in an uncouth backwoods bar-room, although it is called a tavern, where the thickness is not of rugs but of tobacco smoke and corn whiskey fumes and mayhap of tongue also.

This is a noisy place. You sense a quick-on-the-trigger pulse throbbing beneath the rough-hewn sociability. In and out, contrasting with the coarse homespun of townsmen, small planters, river-front characters, and such, wanders an occasional cat-trading frontiersman in fringed greasy coat and coonskin cap, his long-barreled gun on his arm, powder-horn over his shoulder, a sniffing hound at heel.

At a table rather apart are your gentlemen. They lift the scene from the raw. They are a touch of color, dash, and pure romance. If something starts in this group, you anticipate a more congenial thrill. As to costume and bearing they would do acceptably in a Parisian setting of the First Empire period. They might have just stepped over from the Tuileries here. Calf-high boots cuffed at the tops, doeskin,

breeches making the most of gallant limb, spike-tailed coats of broadcloth with enormous collars, a confusion of snowy frills under the chin, locks rumpled and Byronesque beneath Beau Brummel hats—and there you have them.

But let us not misapprehend. They are not necessarily young-bloods, reprobates, roisterers. Mostly they are nothing of the kind, but after a day of conscientious usefulness to themselves and the community, are gathered for an evening's relaxation. They are frankly gambling. As frankly they may perhaps drink until they are drunk. By instinct bred of the times, they are swift to scent a quarrel and thereafter to see it through.

They take, however, no credit for frankness. Would a gentleman playing golf without concealment do so? And these were Territorial days on the Mississippi. Lads who had fought at Bunker Hill were scarcely as yet mellowing down into grandfathers. A gentleman navigates according to his lights, and the lights were still red—very.

Mr. Richard Blanchard, barrister, aged thirty, went according to his lights when he detected the dark young Louisianian cheating. He pushed back his chair and addressed the others at the table so pointedly to the exclusion of the elegant trickster, that the intent could not have been more patent had he lashed his gloves across the man's face.

"Sorry, gentlemen," he said gently, in

deference to their interrupted pleasure, "but I perceive that we are harboring among us an inept thimblerrigger."

The Lousianian sprang up.

"*Por Dios*, for this—"

"He saves me the trouble," Mr. Blanchard went on evenly. "The fellow announces himself."

Then, as though he were reaching himself a decanter from an inanimate buffet, he plucked a card from beneath the wide lapel of the man's exquisite coat.

The others were on their feet, drawing in aversion from the cheat. But they waited with a certain expectancy. And this was true of all in the place, now that they were subtly apprised of what was forward. It was as if a cannon had flashed, and the report must follow directly.

Mr. Blanchard alone seemed to expect nothing. He had not raised his voice, and pleasantly, with a smile that made men his friends for life, he waved his companions adieu, again ignoring only the dark, trembling Louisianian. The latter was the type of wild young rake, evil and handsome and dangerous, offshoot of fine old Spanish-Creole stock, going headlong his dissolute way. He leaped before his accuser, his fury becoming articulate.

"Hold on—you, sir!" he cried. "If you think that you can—"

He faltered, meeting cold gray eyes leveled inquiringly at his own, and he stepped aside. But this impulse, together with significant smiles on the faces about him, goaded him past discretion.

"Y—you understand, *señor*," he said in a voice that slipped and squeaked with passion, "that you owe me—owe me—satisfaction. Tomorrow I—I will send a friend—"

The spectators breathed again. They had wondered if "Slicker Jack" Fuentes would do it, and he had. The profligate was known up and down the river as a wary customer usually, but he had let the Cheyenne in his blood season his judgment over much at last. Men exchanged glances, with a pitying contemptuous lifting of the shoulder. They seemed to behold this Juan Fuentes recumbent on a lonely stretch of sand, and not far away the smoke drifting lazily from the muzzle of Mr. Blanchard's pistol. But they were forgetting a certain essential of the Blanchard ritual, until Blanchard himself recalled it to them.

"A misapprehension," he said, "or else sheer bravado. The rascal knows that I never fight beneath me."

He turned again to leave, and Fuentes being still in his path, he bowed slightly, as to a stranger he had never seen before, for permission to pass. And Fuentes unaccountably made way. With a friendly casual word or nod to an acquaintance here and there, Blanchard went out.



BY THE next morning, when he sat at work in his office over Abernathy & Sons' General Store, the incident had passed from Blanchard's mind, or was remembered as one might remember being snapped at by a pestiferous terrier. Besides, he was a busy man, for "lawing" was a concomitant to progress in the town on the mud-banks that was already taking itself lustily to account, now that it was American and no longer an outpost of France.

But taking sides in those days, even though professionally, often exacted an argument over and above any to be found between sheepskin covers. Learned precedents derived from a stodgy civilization in such cases availed little unless as added provocation, and the matter would proceed to discussion on a "personally responsible" basis.

Mr. Richard Blanchard, who had a white scholarly brow, a clear gray eye, and a clean pleasant mouth, had done his "reading" in the Blue Grass—Lexington, Kentucky—and being of that kind, he was not averse on occasion to carrying an argument from the Territorial courts over into another jurisdiction naively yclept the field of honor.

Over the general store of Abernathy & Sons, which supplied townsmen, settlers, trappers, prairie-freighters and steamboat-ers, Mr. Blanchard was at work, quill in hand moving across the foolscap, a long churchwarden in his other hand. From the long stem of the pipe he occasionally drew a refreshing puff, keeping aglow the fragrant mixture of Virginia leaf and perique in its richly mahoganzed bowl.

Deep in a brief whose subject of litigation would make no difference one way or another in a hundred years—that is, today—he presently heard steps leave the plank sidewalk below his window and mount the outside stairs leading to his door. Glancing up as his visitor entered, he dropped

the quill and stood with arm and hand outstretched, that smile on his lips that made men love him. In the smile there was more than its customary warmth. At once one divined a rock-grounded affection existing between these two men.

"Heigh-o, John, your boat in already!" Blanchard exclaimed.

"I drove her," said the newcomer shortly.

He was a stalwart, wind-burned, out-of-doors man of about Blanchard's own age, forthright and blunt throughout every inch of him.

Blanchard noted the tone and believed he understood. John Starkweather, captain of the *Prairie Belle*, first of her name on the Mississippi, had his young wife on his mind and thought of her preying on his heart. Cramming a primitive steamboat's fire-box, chancing imminent risk of being blown to Kingdom Come, were of small moment if so be he was brought a few hours earlier into the home port and home. In Baton Rouge the captain had met his love, wooed her, married her. She was a Girondet, her blood more French than Spanish.

"John," said Blanchard again, in tacit sympathy; and now he became aware that his friends hand was withheld.

Captain Starkweather was holding both hands stiffly at his side, and his face was troubled, darkened by gloom that was yet mostly embarrassment.

"Well?" said Blanchard; and waited, a frown half questioning, half the beginning of resentment, forming between cold gray eyes.

"Oh, — it," said the captain finally, "I'm not here for myself. I—somebody else sent me."

He remembered then to remove his hat, but did not fling it upon the desk in his old hearty manner; he held it severely across his breast. Yet for all his labored formality, his eyes betrayed him. Like a faithful mastiff's, they were beseeching his friend to understand.

But Mr. Richard Blanchard, if he noticed, outmatched the other in flawless politeness. He bowed.

"At your service, Captain Starkweather."

"Thank you," said the captain gratefully. "Now if you will name your friend, he and I can arrange—"

"One moment." Blanchard's mind was racing over his recent past, yet lighted on no one whom he might have offended. "I

think you have overlooked one small detail. By the way, who is it that I am to fight?"

Captain Starkweather felt himself convicted of clumsiness, and his reply was hasty, not moderated by the careful precision he had meant to give his delicate mission.

"It's that — blackguard cousin of my wife's," he growled.

The gilded handsome rogue of last night's affair was Mrs. Starkweather's kinsman—a third or fourth cousin. He had followed her here, annoying her by the mere fact of his presence in the town, though failing to bring himself to her notice except when her husband was present. The husband, of course, had it exactly wrong.

Blanchard relaxed. His smile came back.

"You've set the thing to rights yourself, John," he laughed. "Tell me—can a blackguard be insulted?"

Starkweather scowled miserably.

"Sir," he said, steeling his eye against his friend's genial humor, "I withdraw the word. I— It— I lack the polish to handle an affair the way you sticklers set about killing each other. But he, the gentleman—is a member of the family I married into, sir. I couldn't refuse him when he asked me to come here and demand—"

Blanchard lifted a protesting hand. Whatever the suspicion of kindly humor crinkling about his eyes, he was again stiffly formal. He realized that he would most help his friend by playing to the deadly punctilio that the other labored to achieve.

"Your pardon, Captain Starkweather," he said, "but this conversation can not go on. I owe Mr. Fuentes no satisfaction whatsoever."

"I'm the judge of that, sir," came the stormy reply. "It's a business touching my family—same as mine—and by Jupiter, sir—"

"If you please, Captain," said Blanchard, "I am very busy this morning—" He was turning to his desk, but stopped and impulsively faced 'round again. "What's the use, John? I can't fight him—even for you!"

"I'd like thundering well to know why you can't?"

"Man, man, he's a proven cheat, caught in the act!"

Starkweather nodded vehemently.

"But he says you called him a coward—anyhow, implied it. At least that is not proved, and he wants a chance to prove he isn't. You owe him that. Drat your pretty distinctions, you owe him that as a man!"

Mr. Richard Blanchard, barrister, took this under thoughtful consideration.

"Happily," he announced, "the charge or implication of cowardice may be sustained without the necessity of fighting him."

"Lawyer's argument—humph!"

"No, man's argument—to a man!"

Blanchard's keen gray eyes were flashing now.

"John, John, can't you see the coward's game? He knows—knew from the first—that I will not fight him. But it is you—of all men, you—that he sends here with his gaudy challenge. Shall I tell you why, old friend?"

"Why, in God's name?" Starkweather's face had gone white.

"Because—he wants me to kill you."

"You—kill me? Dick!"

"It is his purpose. He wants you out of the way. You know why—" Hot words boiled on Starkweather's tongue, but Blanchard went on. "You know why," he repeated steadily. "Yet, not for that would he be advanced one jot in the direction—we both have in mind."

"Curse you—say it! Are you speaking of my wife?"

"I am speaking," said Blanchard, "only true words of a good woman, and—you can make the most of it, John Starkweather. The coxcomb miscalculates, that is all."

"But—his coward's game you spoke of? Wants you to kill me? He's crazy, or you are!"

"Not at all," soberly replied Blanchard. "You are no card cozenner, John. I could not refuse to fight you."

"Fight me? Why in heaven's name should you fight me?"

"I shall have to accept your challenge."

"My challenge? What are you saying—it's Juan Fuentes' challenge!"

"Exactly, but—don't you see?—as I can not accept his challenge, I insult you."

"Oh, I'm insulted, am I? Blest if I seem to notice it!"

"It is a constructive insult. I decline to fight your principal on the ground that he is beneath me. There is an implication here that wings back to you, his second. This is

correct reasoning and according to the law of honor——"

"To fire and brimstone with your law of ——"

"So I say myself. Nevertheless, as the sly rascal calculated, it is a point that you can not let pass if you would hereafter hold up your head among men. Either you admit my contention that you are acting for a poltroon, therein besmirching your own integrity, or else you must clear the stain and hold me to an accounting."

"And, by the Eternal, I will, sir!" cried Starkweather, irate now that he perceived the insult to himself. "Thank you, too, for your instruction, and all your damnable fine points! You shall receive my friend! You——"

"Of course," said Blanchard quietly. "And precisely for the reason that we—you and I—are friends, an apology from me would make us both ridiculous, as would any technical evasion. Fuentes knew this. The conditions must be made as dangerous as possible."

"Be sure of that! It's shoot to kill, never fear!"

Blanchard nodded.

"I am sorry, John," he said, "but if I had not pointed out the—constructive grounds—the dirty scalawag would have done so. And others would have supported him."

Starkweather paused in taking up his hat.

"That's so," he said suddenly. "And it would have come mortal hard—from him especially—from any but you. — it, Dick, you're my friend!"

It was the captain's hand reaching forth this time, and Blanchard gripped it.

As Starkweather went out, a heavily oppressed and unhappy figure, Blanchard overheard him saying to himself—

"Well, be for best anyway—clean up the whole muddle!"



THE lawyer did not go back to his work. He walked up and down the bare room thinking about those last words of his friend. A deluded great-heart, this steamboat captain. The blinding happiness of winning M'lisse Girondet had made him, wherever she was concerned, as simple as a sheep-herder. He could not credit the evidence that she loved him. It was simpler to believe that she

only thought she did. And a natural deduction from that postulate was that, some day, her heart, were she free to bestow it, would go to a likelier and more fortunate man.

And in such soil the dashing cousin had sown his tares of the devil. Blanchard did not need to know by what appearances Slicker Jack Fuentes had contrived to plant in Starkweather's mind the mistaken conviction that he, Fuentes, was the man; but that the conviction was there, Blanchard could not doubt. And being there, it was there for John Starkweather to act upon. The way of John Starkweather—noble, blundering soul—would be to remove himself. He was nothing of a marksman, and Blanchard's pistol was to be the mop for cleaning up the muddle.

Furthermore, the thing was decreed. Touching honor, the code duello was sacred, immutable. By comparison, the enactments of the Medes and Persians were scrawled on a child's slate.

Abruptly the long stem of Blanchard's churchwarden snapped between his teeth. He had bitten it through.

"Blast the code!" he pronounced earnestly.

Still, that changed nothing, and in due course the customary arrangements proceeded with fateful solemnity. In those days nearly every red-blooded community on the Mississippi had its convenient island, appropriate to tragic seclusion, and St. Louis was in the fashion. Hers was Bloody Island, and here the meeting took place the following morning, after the ground mists had been dispersed by the lances of the rising sun.

The time and other details had been kept secret, so that but two flat-bottom rowboats, each with three cloaked men besides a negro at the oars, grounded in the shelving mud of a long sand-spit putting out from the island's drear tangle of briers and stunted oak. The third man of either party was a surgeon, the other two being one of the principals and his second. Under the cape of his great coat each of the two seconds carried a shallow box containing a pair of dueling pistols.

Acting for Blanchard was a retired cavalry officer, Major Amos Starkweather, a dour and uncompromising man considerable older than John Starkweather but John Starkweather's own brother. Among the few about town who knew what was

afoot, this choice of a second by Blanchard had aroused comment and mystification and yet was a natural thing when one paused to reflect on what would be peculiarly Mr. Richard Blanchard's point of view under circumstances so unnatural.

For if Mr. Richard Blanchard had to face his dearest friend with pistol in hand, it was like him to choose for a second one who loved that friend better than himself. And grim Major Starkweather was one to accept for the same reason. If John Starkweather must come to his death, none might aver that it were not clean, much less preventable.

The other second—he acting in behalf of Captain Starkweather—was the sinister cause of it all, Slicker Jack Fuentes. One could imagine Starkweather saying to him:

"Mark ye, Fuentes, I stood your second and got myself into this *jumbali*. Now you stand for me, till Dick Blanchard shoots me constructively full o' holes."

Fuentes had consented with a gleaming flash of teeth. The man asked nothing better than to witness the consummation of his scheming. He had preened himself flamboyantly, from the pomade sleeking back his raven-wing hair to the polish on his Hussar boots, in honor of the anticipated event. A derisive fleer parted his lips as the two groups of three men each met on the sand-spit and lifted their high beaver hats in rigid salutation, and this fleer waxed openly insolent when he and Major Amos Starkweather drew aside to arrange the preliminaries.

"My compliments, dear Major, to your man!" he said while they were loading the pistols. "He is—*ai, la-la*—that clever, you know!"

"Clever?" demanded the major, the twist of an angry snarl in his tone.

"What else, *señor*? He picks himself a poor marksman, though it be his friend the most beloved. Such friendship—beautiful, beautiful!"

"Nough, sir," cried Major Starkweather, "and let me tell you, sir, that your remarks are in villainous bad taste! Wait, though—" He appeared to take fresh hold on his irascible temper, and his features hardened into seams of intent, implacable shrewdness. "Now if I understand you, Mr. Fuentes, there's a grudge sticking in your craw. You'd like to face Mr. Blanchard yourself, is that it?"

"You ask me that?" cried the Louisianian with a despairing upward fling of his dark slim hands. "Let the saints be witness have I not sought the happiness of putting a ball through his kidney? But, my Major, only do me this favor. Provoke him to forget his admirable discretion, and then observe how quickly will I——"

"No," said the major, "Blanchard won't fight you. Excellent reasons, too. Toss for place now. Heads! No matter, you win. Will you be good enough to place your man?"

"My man?" echoed Fuentes with an unpleasant rising inflection. "Your brother, you mean, dear *señor*. Would you care to bid him farewell—take his last message—before he——"

But Major Starkweather had turned on his heel and rejoined Mr. Blanchard, giving him the pistol charged with ball and powder and advising him briefly as to how the choice for position had fallen. Blanchard took the pistol, and nodded without particular interest.

At ten paces, not farther apart than two children tossing a rubber ball, the two friends were placed. Sidewise they stood, facing each other with heads turned to the right. The right arm to the elbow was level with the shoulder. The forearm was erect, the long-barreled pistol, its hammer at full cock, pointing up, ready for the word. To one side the seconds held their hats and cloaks; they had not removed their coats.

Captain Starkweather stood impatient and irritable. More than once he had manifested symptoms of breaking forth with an opinion of the whole dratted flummery. He was further angered by a nervous twitching of his eyelids and an uncontrollable squint to shut out the increasing glare from sand and water. Opposite him in the line of fire his adversary stood gravely at ease, as he might in court when awaiting a ruling from the bench.

Major Starkweather was to count "One—two—three." At the word "three" they were at liberty to fire, or they might withhold their fire and advance, either choosing his own moment for pressing the trigger. If, however, one fired and did not disable the other, then he who had already fired was required to stand and await his adversary's shot. Not to do so was a thing unthinkable among men of honor. If the first exchange of shots was without result,

the pistols were to be reloaded and the duel continued until one man or the other was rendered *hors de combat*.



"SHOOT at the word," Fuentes whispered to his principal. "At the word—*phist*—like that!"

Seemingly it was good advice. Starkweather's hope apparently lay in a lucky shot before Blanchard could fire. On the other hand, such luck was most remote. Starkweather's chance of hitting was certainly at a shorter range than ten paces, and, once having fired, he would be disarmed before a cool and unhurried foe. Slicker Jack's advice was equivalent to a recommendation of suicide, but Starkweather's eyebrows twitched in fretful assent.

"What I intended," he said. "Now, stand out o' the way. Amos, do the counting. Name o' time, let's get it over with!"

Amos Starkweather hesitated the fraction of an instant, glancing swiftly at Blanchard.

"One——" he began.

It was the moment of strain on men's souls that a master of forensics would wait for, play for, seize. The word "two" was yet forming on Major Starkweather's lips when Blanchard tossed aside the weapon in his hand, and with a gesture of apology that might be taken by the company generally, turned to that gentleman.

"It occurs to me, Major," he said, "that Mr. Fuentes might after all have his ardent desire regarding an exchange of shots. For example, if Captain Starkweather should for any reason find himself indisposed, he might delegate his second to take his place. To that I could not fairly object, since Mr. Fuentes would not in that event be facing me in his own character, but purely as the representative of one whose character is beyond——"

With the disclosing of the purport of his words the blood had slowly drained from the Louisianian's olive cheeks, but it was Captain Starkweather who interrupted.

"Get back to your place, Dick Blanchard!" he shouted. "I'm here to do my own fighting!"

"If you please, Major," Blanchard went on, "my conscience must first be set at ease as to whether Captain Starkweather is in fit condition——"

"Fit condition?" bellowed the exasperated captain.

"He is not himself. His arm jerks. His eyes—look at his eyes!"

Major Starkweather looked and became deeply concerned; so much so that he insisted that the two surgeons consult before the affair proceeded further. Both surgeons sided with him. They, too, had noticed—

"Fiddlesticks!" stormed the captain. "I can see plenty good enough to——"

"In that case," his own surgeon interposed, "suppose you tell us which of those two off there is Mr. Blanchard?"

The captain blinked desperately, trying to keep his eyelids apart.

"The one on the right—no, on the left."

He swung 'round angrily. Behind him, at his elbow, Blanchard was quietly laughing.

"Those two are your brother and Doctor McIntyre," said the surgeon. "Now let me look at your eyes."

Only when the bright morning sun was screened out with cloaks held about him could the captain keep his eyes open for the examination. They found the pupils abnormally enlarged. Looked like a partial paralysis of the muscles, the surgeons agreed, tending to prevent the pupils from contracting to shut out the glare, which consequently was blinding. Then, too, the powers of focus were doubtless impaired, so that objects at a short distance away became blurred in outline.

The captain did not try to overthrow the diagnosis, but he squinted at them suspiciously, as he would at a riddle on the water possibly hiding a sand-bar.

"Some hocus-pocus, I'll wager!" he declared. "What's come over my eyes, anyway? What did it?"

The medical gentlemen waved that aside, but they could and did pronounce him in no condition to handle a weapon. Wherefore Mr. Blanchard, of course, declined to fight him.

"What," exclaimed the captain in disgust, "all this politeness, like we were crowned kings and emperors and royal ladies having a spat, and no fight? Look here, Fuentes—which of you is Fuentes? Fuentes, you've got to take my part. It's what you were wanting, and you ought to be happy. Here's your shootin'-iron."

Fuentes took the dueling pistol because Captain Starkweather thrust it into his hand and closed his fingers over it. Fuentes strove hard to achieve a frigid dignity.

He reminded them that Mr. Blanchard had said that he could not fight beneath him.

"Tell him, Major, not to let that worry him," Blanchard spoke up. "His status is wholly different now. If he puts a bullet through me, I assure him that I shall not regard it as personal from him, but as from Captain Starkweather. Then again, he may feel equally at ease should I put a hole through him. He has only to bear in mind that, constructively, the ball has gone through Captain Starkweather."

Starkweather batted his eyes.

"Infernal lawyer!" he muttered in a kind of awe.

"It is according to the code," said Blanchard severely. "Major, can't we hasten matters?"

Duly the situation was reproduced as it had been, except that of the two men facing each other with pistols pointed in air one was now Slicker Jack Fuentes from Baton Rouge, slim and dark and evil but with terror creeping into his insolent black eyes. Again Major Starkweather was counting.

"One—two——"

Fuentes dropped to his knee and fired. There was a flutter at Blanchard's coat sleeve as though unseen fingers had plucked violently at the cloth.

"Three!"

A faint smile touched Blanchard's lips as he stood and held the stricken eyes of the man crouching ten paces away with his own. Slowly his uplifted arm, and with it the pistol, began descending. Arm and pistol reached the horizontal and passed it, slanting slightly downward. And now Blanchard's index finger crooked out, wrapping itself caressingly forward and over the trigger.

The spectators turned their heads, even that dour man, Major Starkweather. But instead of the expected report a squeal like a rat's smote their ears. They looked, then, to see Slicker Jack Fuentes plunging wildly into the nearest thicket, moaning as he went. Blanchard was carefully setting the hammer of his pistol back on the unexploded charge.

"But Dick," cried Captain Starkweather, "you said you'd never fight him?"

Blanchard glanced inland, whence the crackling and snapping of brush still came to their ears.

"And did I, John?" he asked.

"Humph, small chance! Lord, Dick, I——"

Suddenly the captain set to on his friend's hand as though he would wring it off. Then something else occurred to him. There was a "the time has come to talk of many things" gleam in his squint as he turned on the two surgeons.

"Now," he said, "if you doctors don't mind, I'd like mighty well to know what's happened to my eyes?"

They hastened to assure him that it was nothing permanent; in a day or two he would be all right.

"Oh, I will, eh? Then—Amos, tell me—will I still have to fight Dick? Am I still insulted?"

"Nonsense! That's wiped out."

And Blanchard added—

"Your second, in taking your place, kindly wiped it quite all out."

"And himself, too, far as this Territory is concerned," growled the major.

"About my eyes?" the captain persisted.

"Eh, Doc, what——"

"Certain drugs produce a temporary dilation of the pupils——"

Major Starkweather interrupted.

"M'lisse put some drops in your coffee this morning, John, or in the water you washed your face with."

"M'lisse?"

"She was well-nigh crazy. She'd heard, you understand. Fact is, we told her. Then McIntyre here helped us out. Told her what to do if she wanted Fuentes shifted into your place before the shooting started."

"Fuentes? But Fuentes is her cousin! She——"

"She said it would serve him right."

"M'lisse said——" John Starkweather repeated dazedly, almost groggily, but he batted his eyes so that he had to turn away.

It wasn't only the glare. He was seeing stars, the glory of constellations.

"What in time are we waiting for?" he demanded, starting for the nearer flat-bottom. "She'll be at the wharf—waiting!"

THE ROOKIE

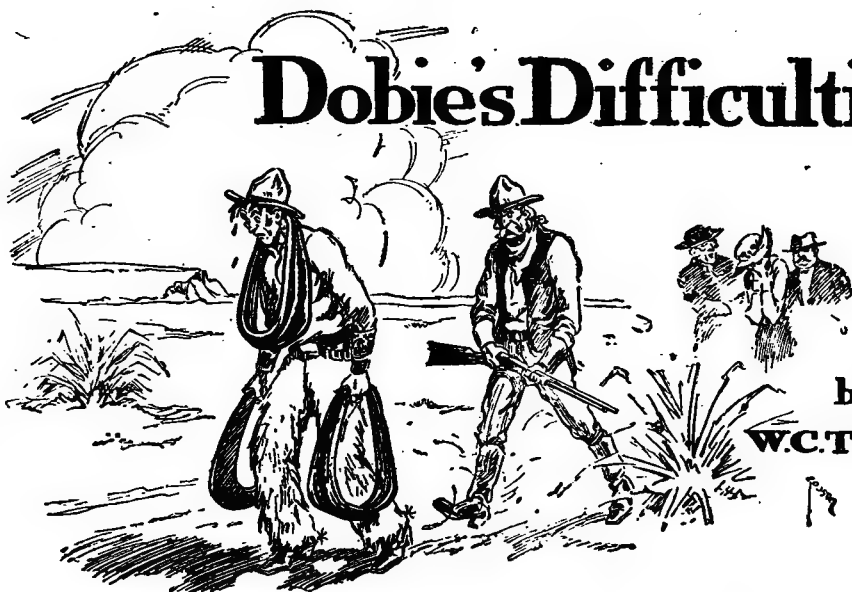
BY CHARLES R. ANGELL

THEY send him after the gun report
Or maybe the skirmish line;
He often hunts for the bugle pump,
But never lets loose a whine;
He holds his gun in an awkward way;
He tangles his feet at drill,
But he pins his faith to a khaki suit
And the might of a stubborn will.

He knows the pangs of a homesick heart,
And blistering feet as well;
The call of "taps" is as sweet to him
As the sound of a vesper bell.
He hates the daylight that ends his sleep
And rouses the bugle's din,
But the gloom that scorches his very soul
Is masked by a cheerful grin.

So, here's a toast to the awkward lad
Who follows a battle creed,
And sweats and aches in an Army camp
To answer a nation's need:
He may be raw, and he may be green,
But he's part of a country's plan,
And one of the noblest works of God—
A regular fighting man.

Dobie's Difficulties



by
W.C. Tuttle

Author of "Alias Whispering White," "Sages in Sageland," etc.

Mesquite City, Aug. 5.

DEAR HANK:

I take this occasion to let you know that I ain't heard a word from you since that last time you wrote. What was the matter, Hank? Did the old man spurn my offer to come back and work faithfully for him, and do the best a man can for his interests, or did he tell you no, and you're too tender-hearted to hurt my feelings in a letter by telling me no?

I am now in a position where I wish I knowed how I stand over there. Me and my wife Emmeline are as well as usual and as well as can be expected. Hank, some women expect too much, and for that reason a feller ought to know more about their wishes and dislikes before he promises to love, honor and obey them. He ought to stop, look and listen like a railroad-crossing.

Not that Emmeline ain't a loving wife and so forth, Hank. I ain't saying a word against her character, and maybe she ain't to blame for having the relatives she's got, but she might have let me into the game a little easier. If she'd 'a' said to me, "Dobie, I got a uncle who is mean, ornery and tight, also narrow," it might have helped a lot, and she might also have said, "Husband, these relatives of mine can't

mind their own business no more than a coyote can."

Don't you see how it would have put me on my guard, Hank? You know my motto is a square deal and no frozen decks. I treat all men like he was my brother, and expect to be likewise treated, and not as a nephew.

Emmeline's uncle, Gabe Galesburg, says to me a few days ago—

"I don't mind having Emmeline around here, Dobie, 'cause she's flesh of my flesh, but a strong man like you ought to get a job, and not sponge on your wife's relatives."

"I ain't sponging," says I. "You'll get paid well O. K. All I'm waiting around here for is to get that letter from Hank Harrison, which will contain enough money for me to square myself, and also notify me of my old job at the Lazy Y. If I'd 'a' had the sense that God gave geese in Ireland I'd 'a' never left there."

See how I shot it into him, Hank? I sure know how to talk to a man. He don't say nothing for a minute, and then he says, confidential-like—

"Dobie, there's two people in our house what didn't show much sense, and Emmeline is one of them."

I wonder who the other one is, Hank? I won't say that Uncle Gabe is shy on sense,

Hank, even if he is ornery and mean, but of course he knows himself better than I do.

Well, Hank, I didn't do much for a few days, while I sort of rested and got back into physical shape once more. A feller has got to have a little rest once in a while, and there ain't no better tonic than to lay down on the grass and so forth.

Emmeline comes out to me one afternoon, and she says to me—

"Dobie, tomorrow morning you go to work."

Just like that, Hank. Just like a judge says to you, "And may the Lord have mercy on your soul."

"Is that so?" says I. "How long have you knowed that, sweet wife?"

"Uncle has got you a job in Stillman's grocery store, and you go to work tomorrow."

"Uncle did?" says I. "Uncle's got a lot of gall, Emmeline. He never asked me nothing about it."

"He's doing it all for my sake," says she, sad-like. "You never consider me at all."

Hank, what could I do? When Emmeline starts spraying tears, I puts up both hands, like she had a gun on me, and says:

"Wife, dry them tears. Mr. Dalton's son will foller thy uncle's guiding hand, and we be unto pickles and prunes."

You know, Hank, that I'm a feller what can turn his hand to anything, and if I do say it myself I made a good clerk. I done well. Old man Stillman had to admit it himself. He says to me:

"Young man, there's only a few things for you to learn, and here is some of them: vinegar don't smell like nor inhabit the same barrel as kerosene, which Mrs. Ames will be coming back to tell you in a short time; you can't keep charge accounts in your own head; and last but not least: I've got a till back there where I keep the money, and I don't care to see you making change out of your own pocket. When you learn all these trifling details you'll be a good grocery clerk, but I ain't running no business college, so you better take off your apron and look for one."

What could I do, Hank? I got sore at the old pelican, and I says:

"You sure got a poor system, old-timer, and I don't like the place. I won't work no place where I'm watched like a burglar, so I'm all through as soon as you can fill my place."

"It's filled," says he, and I says:

"All right. Take your darn apron!"

I throws it at him and starts for the door.

"Whoa!" he yells, and when I looks around, he's got a shotgun in his hands. "Come back here and dump my money in the till," says he. "Did you think you owned this place?"

"Your money?" I asks. "Your money?"

"In your pocket," says he. "Must be several dollars."

"Yeah!" says I, and I'm mad, Hank.

"I had seven dollars when I come here, old-timer, and all over that likely is yours."

"You had seven dollars?" somebody asks, and there stands Uncle Gabe.

"Well," says I, "something like that."

I dumps eight dollars and fifteen cents out on the counter. There's a five dollar bill, and the rest in silver.

"You sold five dollars' worth of flour to Max Anderson, six-bits' worth of beans to Jimmy Rice, a box of cartridges to Al McCoy, and a gallon of vinegar to Mrs. Ames," says the old coot, so I just shoves it all across the counter to him, and turns my pockets wrong side out.

"Take it all," says I. "A measly seven dollars ain't worth arguing about."

"Dobie, I'm ashamed of you," says Uncle Gabe, and I says:

"So am I, but I've always been that way. Come hard go easy—that's me. I'm ashamed to be intimidated by that old gobbler, so to save a scene I'll give him that seven dollars, and wish him success in a business way."

"Yah!" says Stillman, mean-like. "He tried to hold out on me, Galesburg. He's crooked—that's what he is!"

Hank, that's a mean way for a man to speak after you've worked for his interests the way I have. I ain't crooked, Hank, as you know. Maybe I was a little hasty about stating the exact amount in my pocket, but seven dollars would easy cover it, and that was the first figure that come into my mind, so I said it, and when I say a thing I stick to it. I ain't vischious nor mean in a small way, and, Hank, when he called me a crook, I heaved one of them scale-weights at his head.

Maybe I was wrong in doing that, Hank, 'cause he's a small man, but I'm sorry I missed, 'cause he up and grabs me by the neck, and we sure kept house for a while.

Me and him are almost to the door, when I hears a female voice say—

"Kerosene ain't no good for pickles!"

Then I gets baptized. Next I must have got banged on the head with that stone jug, and when I wakes up I'm on my back in the dust, and Emmeline is standing there on the steps looking at me.

"Dobie Dalton," says she, sad-like. "I came down to see how you're getting along, and—and what do I find?"

"Well," says I, "you can easy see how I'm getting along, and I'll bite—what do you find?"

"I found you fighting again," says she, and I says right back at her:

"No you didn't, dear Emmeline. Not this time. I was assaulted."

Uncle Gabe is there, and of course Emmeline can't take my word for it, and has to ask him. He shakes his head, like he didn't want to mix up in no argument with us, Hank, and then he says:

"Maybe it wasn't exactly his fault, Em, but somehow he forgot that there was a till in the store. Maybe he imagined he owned the place."

"He didn't steal money, did he?" wails my wife, and I gets right up out of the dirt and I says:

"There ain't but one answer to that question, and that is no. If you don't believe it—search me."

Hank, did I tell you that Sleepy' and Blazer didn't get sent to the pen? They proved that they never had nothing to do with that robbery. Windy and Hondo got from five to twenty-five years, and I said to Windy—

"I'd hate to get sentenced that way, and not know exactly what I got coming."

And he said:

"Dobie, you needn't worry. It may take the jury some time to decide whether it will be hanging or life, but it will be one or the other."

Windy always was a josher, Hank, and he said he hoped that I'd still be alive when they got out.

Emmeline and Uncle Gabe didn't search me, Hank. Emmeline knows I'm honest, and Uncle Gabe knows it, too, but he hates to admit it. They didn't ask me to go home with them, so I went over to a saloon to wash up a little, and when I came out, who do you think I met? Maybe you heard that they came down here, so I won't make

no bet with you, but it was "Cinch" Culler and "Slim" Seehorn. Them two falls on my neck and are glad to meet me, and, Hank, I know I'm up against it.

Of course they has to drop in on me when I'm in this fix. Just after me and Emmeline came here I wrote to Slim, and I told him that I'd admire to have him and Cinch come down and make us a visit. You know how easy it is to give the wrong impression in a letter. I'm a honest man, Hank, and I hews pretty close to the line when I tells a thing but some folks can't read nothing without putting the wrong meaning on things.

"Surprised you, didn't we, you old pie-hunter?" whoops Cinch.

"Thought we wouldn't accept your invite, didn't you? Well, here we are, and we can stay a week with you."

"Take us right out and show us them cows your uncle bought for you," says Slim. "We sure was pleased to hear you were doing so well down here."

"What could I say, Hank? I knowed like a flash that they'd misunderstood me. You know what Cinch said once? He said he'd kill a man quicker for lying than for anything on earth. I ain't no liar, Hank, and I don't admit it to you, but it's as bad to be killed mistakenly as any other way. Cinch is altogether too quick that way. He draws conclusions a long time after he pulls his gun, and he's got a bad reputation for not wishing to argue the point. I hate a man who makes a fool statement like that, 'cause he has to hurt folks' feelings if he aims to make good.

"Well," says I to Slim, "I'm a heap sorry, but I've sold out. This here climate don't agree with me, so I sold out cheap, and am leaving here in a short time."

Don't that sound like me, Hank! Ain't I the quick thinker in a emergency? A feller like me ought to rise in this world on that account.

"By golly!" says Slim. "Is that so? I'm glad to hear that, Dobie. On our way down here I says to Cinch, 'Maybe we can borrow a few dollars from Dobie if we run short,' and he says, 'Dobie owes me fifteen dollars, and that will keep us going for a while.'"

"I'm dry," says Cinch. "You got any favorite bartender here?"

"Me?" says I. "Didn't nobody tell you about me? Pshaw! I thought everybody up around Cactus would hear of that,

Cinch. I'm on the water-wagon. A man can't get married and expect to get no place in the world if he lets the fumes of liquor cloud his brains."

"You can drink mineral water or sody if you wishes," says Slim, "but anybody what sells out a herd of cows ought to set them up to a pair of punchers what never had nothing. Don't preach prohibition to me and Cinch 'cause we ain't got no brains to cloud."

Hank, you remember Bob Peele? He's dealing a game in the Silver Bit saloon, and is stuck on the school-teacher here. Just then he comes along, and when he sees me he yells:

"Dobie, can I see you for a minute? Business proposition."

Hank, I swore right there that hereafter I'm going to mention Bob in my prayers. I told Cinch and Slim to go in the saloon, and I'd be there in a minute.

"Dobie," says Bob, "how would you like to make twenty dollars?"

"Anything short of murder, and I'd consider that," says I.

"Here's the idea," says he. "Me and Miss Mooney are engaged. Did you ever see a *Heart and Hand* magazine?"

I said I had, and he says:

"I been writing to a female who lives in St. Louis. She's a good-looker, and like a fool I sent her money to come here with. This was before me and Miss Mooney got engaged, and today this female from St. Louis is due to show up. Ain't that the limit?"

"Where does me and that twenty come in?" I asks.

"She ain't never seen my face," says he, and here is the idea: you go up to the train and tell her that you're Bob Peele. Me and Miss Mooney are going to be married today, and we'll go out on the same train that she comes on. Sabe?

"I've got it all fixed at the Palace Hotel for her, and I've left her enough money in the hotel safe to go back home on. All you got to do is to take her to the hotel, and then lay low until she gets tired of the place and leaves. I ain't got the nerve to face her, after the letters I've wrote to her, and if Miss Mooney got wise to it—well, Dobie, you're married, and you know. What do you say?"

"Me? I'd say 'Hurrah for our side!' Can I have the money now?"

"Half of it," and we shakes hands on the deal.

That sure was a life-saver, Hank. I went over to the Silver Bit and entertained Cinch and Slim like a prince. After a while Cinch asks me how many drinks a man has to stand up under to get on to the water-wagon. Said he'd be willing to try for membership. Then I told him that I meant to say I was off mixed drinks.

When it's about noon I asks them if they had any choice where we will eat, and they both said they'd love to have dinner with me and Emmeline in our own new home.

"Don't make no excuses," says Cinch. "We'll take pot-luck with the family, if it ain't nothing but ham and eggs and biscuits and coffee."

I buys another drink, and we all goes outside.

"You ain't ashamed to take us to your home, are you?" asks Cinch, when I don't start right out, and I says:

"No, I ain't ashamed of nothing nor nobody. Come on."

We stops on Uncle Gabe's porch, and they looks at the place.

"Some nice little shack you and Emmeline got here, you lucky devil," says Cinch. "You sure are doing fine."

Just then, Hank, I gets another quick idea, and I says:

"Let's surprise her. I'll step around the corner while you knocks, and I'll bet she'll be surprised."

I lopes around the corner, and pretty soon I hears Uncle Gabe's voice say—

"I don't know where he is, and I don't care."

I reckon they must have asked for me, and then I hears Emmeline say—

"No, they're not—they're friends of Dobie's."

I hears the door slam, and then Cinch says:

"Ain't that a — of a way to act! Let's find Dobie."

Well, Hank, there ain't no news to write, so will close for this time. Give my regards to the old man, and tell him I hope he needs a new man in a short time. I still owe money to that doctor, so I couldn't very well call him again, so I went to Doc Sloan, who is a veterinary, and he said I could pay him when he asked me for it. I guess he treated me for spavin, ringbone and blind staggers, and also let me sleep in his stable.

They say that curiosity killed a cat, Hank, and maybe that cat was like me—hung around and asked what was going on.

Y'rs very truly and sincerely,

DOBIE DALTON.

P. S. Send all letters and money care of Gen. Del. as usual.

Mesquite City, Aug. 7.



DEAR HANK:

I have now got a little time, so will write you again. If I don't hear from you pretty soon I'm going to write to the post-office at Washington, B. C., and ask what's the matter. They must lose a lot of mail, Hank, and the person what don't get it like me is the sufferer. Hank, in my last letter I forgot to tell you something. If you didn't know me so well I'll bet you'd 'a' thought I kept that ten dollars I got from Bob Peele, and never gave value received for it. Not me, Hank. The name of Dalton ain't never been smirched by no such a trick. When I heard Cinch say they was going to look for me I loped around the house, and cut across the flat down to town. I spends my last two-bits for a drink, and then goes up to the depot.

Bob and his bride don't show up. Her and Emmeline are quite good friends, and when the train rolls in they still ain't there. This female hops off the train, and just then it strikes me that I don't know her name.

I waltzes right up and grabs her grip. Hank, she's a hy-iu looker, and modest, 'cause her face gets a little red.

"I'm Bob Peele," says I, and she says—"I'm Miss Harvey."

Leave it to me, Hank, to find out things. I forced her hand that time.

"I got a nice room all fixed up for you at the hotel," says I.

I takes her by the arm, and we waltzes right down the street. She's easy to look at, Hank, and has Miss Mooney beat sixteen ways from the jack.

We're strolling along, when I happens to look up, and there is Uncle Gabe and Emmeline, standing there looking at us. I says to myself—

"Here's where I get even with them."

So I don't even pretend to see them at all, Hank.

Me and her are almost to the hotel, when here comes Sleepy and Blazer, backing down the street, with a gun in each hand, and they seems to be shooting at the

Silver Bit saloon. Somebody inside there is talking back with a rifle, and along comes a bullet and smashes a window beside us. I says to her:

"That ain't nothing, miss. After you're here a while you'll get so you can catch bullets in your teeth."

Just then a bullet hits Blazer in the heel at the boot, and it knocks his feet out from under him.

While he sets there filling his gun, Hank, I comes to the decision that he either ain't no gent or he don't know there's a lady near, 'cause he sure does shock the both of us. I takes her by the arm, and rushes her toward the hotel, and just at the door we meets Cinch and Slim.

Cinch grabs me by the arm and says a few badly chosen words, but when he sees the lady he lets loose on me and says—

"Feller, we'll be here when you come out!"

And I says—

"So will I."

The proprietor grins and hands me a key, and I takes her right up to her room, where she sets down and begins to cry.

"Mesquite City is a tough old place," says I, "and no place for a lady. In the safe down-stairs is the money for you to return to your home on, and if you'll take my advice you'll take the next train out of here. Honest, you ought to."

"Money for me to return home on?" she asks.

I says:

"All you got to do is ask the man at the desk for that package of money I left there for you. Sabe? Excuse me while I go down and see who got killed."

When I got down there I finds Uncle Gabe and Emmeline talking to the hotel man. I walks up close-like, and I hears the feller say—

"Well, as near as I can find out he advertised for her."

Just then they turns to see me. Emmeline looks at me like I was a homicide, and then says—

"You—you big brute!"

"I ain't," says I, "I never hurt her nor nobody."

Just then Miss Harvey comes down-stairs and walks over to the counter, and points at me when she says:

"This gentleman left a package of money here for me. I'll take it, please."

He reaches under the counter and hands her a envelope, and as she goes back upstairs she says to me—

"Thank you so much for the money."

"My ——!" snorts Uncle Gabe. "Thanked him for money!"

When Emmeline begins to cry I goes over and puts my arm around her, but she pulls away from me and says:

"You brute! Why did I ever marry you?"

"Search me," says I. "Maybe you loved me, Emmeline."

"Loved you!" she wails. "You bigamist—you!"

Hank, what is a bigamist? I think she was sore 'cause she saw me with Miss Harvey, but that ain't no good reason to call me things like that, was it?

After they went out I peeked out of the window and saw a crowd in front of the saloon, so I went over there. Somebody had stopped a chunk of lead, and when I saw Cinch and Slim I went up to them and asked them who it was.

"Sh-h-h-h!" whispers Slim. "Come around back of the saloon, and we'll impart the sad news."

Hank, if anybody ever wants to tell you sad news you make them tell you right on the spot, or don't wait that long. Never go around the corner to hear bad news, 'cause it ain't a bit lucky.

It's almost night when I crawls out of an empty barrel, what has had tar in it, and looks around. I don't remember getting into that barrel, so I'd almost bet they used underhanded methods on me. Some folks' idea of fair play is a whole lot like that, Hank. I went out on the street and looks around, and over on the sidewalk is Bob Peele, so I goes over to collect that ten dollars.

"Gosh!" says he. "You're still running true to form, Dobie."

"I'll take that other ten now," says I. "I need medical attention."

"Yes," says he, "you need it O. K."

Then he goes on staring at the ground.

"Can I congratulate you?" I asks.

"If you feel like it," says he. "Anything but marriage."

"Ain't you married?" I asks, and he shakes his head.

"Nope. Left at the tape. Your lovely wife put in her oar and tipped over the boat."

"My Emmeline?" I asks, and he nods.

"Yeah. She talks with Mabel on the

evils of married life. She held you up as a howling example, and I reckon Mabel took one look and shied."

"I ain't howling no example," says I, "but just the same I wish my wife had a friend like your Mabel had before I married her. I'll take that ten."

Just then an old pelican comes hobbling up the sidewalk, and stops beside us. He's one of them old coots what wears hair instead of a collar and necktie. He asks which is Mister Peele, and then he says—

"Young feller, I'd like to have you explain."

"What about?" asks Bob. "I don't remember you."

"I'm J. D. Watson, and I'm a trustee of the school."

"Pass," says Bob. "I'm too old to go to school."

"Yes, dad bust your hide!" says the old person. "But you ain't too old to interfere with its affairs!"

"You're edging close to the loco lodge, old-timer," says Bob. "I ain't interfered with no school."

"Yes, you have," says he, shaking his cane at Bob. "You takes our teacher to wife, didn't you? She gives us short notice, and I has a mighty hard time getting another one. Located one in Helena, and when she gets over here she shies a little at the town, and you gives her money to go home on. Yes, you did! Don't deny it. She left fifteen minutes ago on your money. Miss Harvey was her name, and you sent her away—dad bust you!"

Well, Hank, there ain't no news to write about. I hope you never know the need of money. It sure is a awful feeling. I won't ask Bob for that ten dollars. That trustee was a bum referee, 'cause he let Bob hit me when I'm down. I could easy cash a money-order here, Hank, 'cause I'm well knowed and favorably. I hope these few lines will reach you feeling well.

Y'rs very truly and resp'y,

DOBIE DALTON.

P. S. Emmeline might send her regards to everybody.

Mesquite City, Aug. 12.



DEAR HANK:

I went down and talked to that postmaster like a uncle today about holding out on me. I said to him:

"See here, old-timer, you ain't giving me

a square deal. My friend Hank Harrison, of Cactus, has wrote to me lately, enclosing money in same, and I ain't seen hide nor hair of it. You better shake a leg and hand it over or I'll make trouble. Sabe?"

It sure makes me mad, Hank. I ain't never done nothing to that postmaster, Hank, to make him act that way. My motto is to let well enough alone and silence gives consent. He never said a word, Hank, so I think he must consent. There's another person in there, a big feller, and when I calls this postmaster's game this big person comes out and looks me over.

"Do you mean to accuse this man of stealing your money orders?" he asks.

I says—

"Well, I never got them."

He says:

"Are you sure they ever were sent?"

Now, Hank, what could I say? I told him that if they wasn't they ought to have been. I told him that I'd asked you for them often enough. Wasn't that getting out of a hard question? That big person was worse than a lawyer, Hank. He wouldn't take no explanation. He asked me if I realized that I was accusing a servant of Uncle Sam. I saw that soft answers wasn't getting me no place, so I says—

"Well, what of it?"

That wasn't nothing to get mad about, was it, Hank? All I said was: "Well, what of it?" Just like that. Somebody said afterward that he was a postal inspector, but I'll tell you what I think, Hank. I think he could be all out of condition and lick Jim Corbett in one round.

I got some satisfaction out of it though. When he throwed me out through the door I knocked down Uncle Gabe, who was coming in, and we both went clean out into the street.

Uncle got up and says to me—

"Let this be the last time you ever hop me that way!"

I never argues with him, Hank. I made up my mind that this would be the time that folks can't say I'm a brawler. He hauled me to my feet, and slapped me right side of the ear. It made me mad, but I don't lose my presence of mind. I turned my head around, and says—

"Slap the other cheek, you sheep-herding salamander!"

Hank, I said slap, but I reckon I was

misunderstood, as I usually am. Giving him the benefit of the doubt I might say that he forgot to open his fist. That was the first time I ever heard the church bell ring on Friday.

When I got up a feller had me by the arm, and he says to me—

"I'm the city marshal, and I arrests you for disturbing the peace."

"Did I disturb it?" I asks, and he says I did.

"I'm sorry," says I, "'cause I sure been looking for it for a long time. What did it look like?"

"Don't josh with me," says he, and I says—

"Do I look like a josher?"

He says—

"No, you look like a Hamburger."

Just then Bob Peele comes along, and says:

"Hello, Bill. Where you going with the punching bag?"

"Arrested him for fighting," says he. Then Bob says:

"You better change the charge to getting licked. To arrest him for fighting would be like arresting a rabbit for manslaughter."

Bob is my friend, Hank. That's the second time he's proved a friend in need, and he got this Bill person to let me go. After he's gone Bob says to me—

"Dobie, I hope you don't hold it against me for licking you."

I said no, 'cause he didn't lick me, Hank. You can't say a man is licked when he don't put up no fight to speak of. He hit me on the chin, and I sort of remember that he hit me some more, but I do know I never put up resistance, which made it no fight. When I said no he said—

"I'm glad, 'cause I don't want the bad will of no dog," which is right, Hank.

Then he says to me—

"I don't blame you for quitting that job in the grocery store, 'cause you got too much brain to tie yourself to a grocery apron."

Hank, you can't get away from the fact that when a man's got a brain somebody will find it out. Brains and murder will out. I told him that I felt the same way about it, and that's why I am laying in wait for something worthy of my talents, and then he says to me—

"How would you like to be a guard on the Antelope stage line?"

I said it was worth considering, but I ain't never gave it a thought, thinking it took a man of a vicious disposition. I'm naturally a mild person, as you know, Hank, and home-loving, and I hates fights, brawls and scenes.

Well, Hank, he up and told me that I could get the job for the asking, and I said I'd ask. Then he says—

"Let's go have a drink, and meet some folks, and have a quiet time."

Hank, you could guess three times and be wrong as to who them folks are. It's Cinch and Slim. They apologizes for what they done, and we all feels better. I tells them about my new job, and they congratulates me. Over at Bob's room we meets the feller what bosses the stage line. After the first drink he hires me. He thanks Bob for sending him such a good man. Then he says to me:

"Dobie," he called me by my first name, like he knowed me for years, "Dobie, how would you like to make some easy money?"

I said I'd look into his proposition, and if it was worthy of my consideration I'd consider it. He went over and peeked out of the door, and then he says to me in a whisper:

"Here is the scheme: tomorrow morning you start work. 'Honesty' Hardgrove is driving, and you set up there on the seat with him with a shotgun on your lap. Down at the crossing of Prickly-Pear Creek you'll get held up. Sabe? Honesty will naturally go for his gun, and here is where you get that money. Can you figure out some way to keep him from shooting, and the same to you; and make it look like a accident? If you can it's worth a hundred dollars to you. What do you say?"

"Dobie can do it fine," says Cinch. "When it comes to figuring out things you can put your money on Dobie Dalton. He's square as a die, and I'm proud to be a friend of his."

See how I misjudged Cinch, Hank? Snap judgment misses nine times out of ten. Well, I told them that I sure could if anybody could, and then I told them the shape I'm financially in. They all chipped in, and I got two dollars and eighty-five cents, and the boss of the stage outfit gave me a place to sleep in his barn.

The next morning I climbs on to the stage with the driver, who is a old pelican with a mean look about his whiskers. We got

four buzzard-headed broncs hitched to the stage, and who do you think our passengers are, Hank? Uncle Gabe, Emmeline and the Reverend Something-or-Other, who is a preacher, and looks like a milk-punch on half-rations.

Uncle Gabe and Emmeline look up at me, but I just slips a couple of shells in my gun, and acts like I'm strange to them.

"I sure wish we was in Antelope, Emmeline," says Uncle Gabe, as he helps her inside, and she says—

"Why?"

He says—

"Because there's a Joner on this ship."

He looked right at me when he said it. He knows that ain't my name, but a person who has associated with sheep as long as he has don't know Dalton from Joner nor a ship from a stage.

I've been to Antelope, Hank, but I don't know where Prickly-Pear Creek is, so I got to take a chance and wait. I tries to talk to Honesty, but his mind is all on driving. Some folks can't do two things to once like I can.

If I do say it myself, Hank, I never seen a Wells-Fargo guard what put up a better show than I did. I got the physique what goes to make up a good guard, and I'm a good man in a fight. I sees old Honesty squinting at me, and I asks him if there's anything curious about me, and he says:

"I was admiring you, son. You sure got all the ear-marks what goes to make a perfect man. Narrow between the eyes, scant chin, and a forehead what slants right back from your brows."

"Yes," says I, "and I'm all bone and muscle."

He says—

"Your muscles don't show a lot, but I'll take your word for them."

Well, Hank, we drives down to a creek, and just about the time the leaders are reaching for a drink two men steps out of the brush and yells—

"Grab the sky!"

Then they covers us with guns.

I've got the muzzle of that riot-gun resting on the dashboard in front of me, and when old Honesty grabs for his hip, I heaves up with that gun, and brings one of his feet along with it. I'm awful strong, as you know, Hank, and I tips the old fellow right off over the front wheel on his head.

Then I reaches up high, as per orders. By that time they're up close, and have got Honesty's gun. They makes Uncle Gabe, Emmeline and the sky-pilot get out and line up beside the stage. Then one of them says—

"Throw us the strong box, Dobie."

So I dumps her off to them, and sets down and rolls a smoke.

Uncle Gabe sure looks mad at me when he hands over his money, and sees me grinning at him. The preacher got sore about it, and told them all about the wrath to come and so forth. They collects most everything in sight, and then one of them says—

"We ain't going to take no chance on you folks, so we're going to set you on foot."

Hank, they cuts the harness of them broncs and turns them loose. Here it is darn near twenty miles to Mesquite, and about the same to Antelope, and here I am on foot. They takes the strong box, and packs it out of sight in the brush.

"Now," says I, "I'm sore I didn't shoot them both."

Uncle Gabe and Honesty looks at me, and then at each other. Emmeline begins to irrigate her cheeks, and the sky-pilot says a short prayer. Honesty walks over and gets my gun, and begins to take the powder and shot out of the shells.

"What's the big idea?" I asks, and he says:

"Young man, I'm going to use these primers to blow your brains out with. To waste good powder and lead would be like hunting chipmunks with a cannon."

"I'd vote for the cannon," says Uncle Gabe. "The primers might work after you got inside, but it would take a Mauser to penetrate."

Hank, I can be joshed just so far, and right then I gets mad. Honesty got mad too, and said he thought I was in cahoots with the robbers.

"What in thunder did you dump me off the seat for, I'd like to know?" he asks, and I got a answer ready for him, Hank.

I says:

"I had a good reason. My wife and uncle was inside that stage, and suppose them fellers had started shooting that way and hit one of them."

Hank, I had him stumped, 'cause he never met a person before who can think as far forward as I can, and all he can say is:

"Well, here we are, no matter what you thought. Them robbers has got that box which held five thousand for the Antelope National Bank, and just because you don't know how to lift up a gun."

"Don't chide me, old-timer," says I. "I was looking out for my dear wife and relative by marriage, and I've stood about enough from you anyway. You fell off that seat 'cause you didn't have the nerve to fight, and wanted an alibi."

Didn't I throw the hook into him, Hank? Leave that part to little Dobie. He can't think of nothing for a minute, and then he says to me—

"Let me have a couple of cartridges, if you ain't lost them."

I gave him a couple and he loaded the gun.

"Going to foller them?" I asks, but he shakes his head and says:

"Nope. Young feller, you're too strong in the mind and muscle for the company you're in, so I'll just ask you to handicap yourself so we can keep pace with you. You're going to put a horse-collar around your neck, and take one in each hand. I'm sorry they cut up them tugs, 'cause if they hadn't I'd hitch you up and we'd all ride home."

Hank, I never was so mortified in my life. Right before my wife and uncle by marriage. Did you ever wear a horse-collar, Hank? And carry one in each hand.

I said to Emmeline and Uncle Gabe—

"Are you folks going to stand here and see me wear that collar and carry two more?"

Uncle Gabe says:

"No, we're not, Dobie. We're going to walk behind you. We couldn't bear it if we had to stand still."

Hank, I suffered awful, but right behind me comes Honesty with his riot-gun. We must have walked about five miles, when here comes a rig going our way. It's that "Stony" Wells, who herded sheep for Uncle Gabe, and got away with my vest and thirty-two dollars. He's got a two-seated hack. Uncle Gabe tells him about the robbery, and he says:

"Jump in, folks. Lucky thing I came along."

Uncle Gabe, and Emmeline and the preacher got in the back seat, and Honesty got in with Stony in the front.

"Where do I set?" I asks.

Stony looks at me, and then says to Uncle Gabe—

"Mister Galesburg, there's a long rope under the back seat, which you can use to lead him with."

"Is that a fact?" says I. "Well, I'll let you know one thing, old-timer. You can drive me at the point of a gun, but I'll be darned if you can lead me on the end of a rope."

"Go ahead, Stony," says Honesty. "He'll foller, I reckon."

Hank, they drove away, and left me standing in the middle of that hot, dusty road, with a horse-collar around my neck, and one in each hand. As soon as they're out of sight, I puts my thumb up to my nose at their dust, and throws them collars way off in the brush. If Honesty thinks I'm going to wear them all the way to Mesquite he's crazy.

Hank, that was some walk but I made it. My feet are swelled up fierce, but I limps into Mesquite without a audible whimper, just because I got more physical nerve than a Injun. I sure am a wonderful marvel that way, and nothing seems to faze me. When I see Bob Peele he's excited a lot, and he leads me off the main street.

"Dobie, you don't need to explain," says he. "The whole town knows how it was done, and there seems to be considerable sentiment. Old Honesty thinks you're in with the robbers, on account of you spoiling his chances to shoot, and for the reason that they called you by name."

"Well," says I, "I'll take that hundred, Bob, and defy public sentiment. What if they did call me by name? I knowed them and they knowed me."

"You did? You knew them, Dobie?" he asks.

"Sure. It was Cinch and Slim, wasn't it, Bob? They was to hold it up at Prickly-Pear Creek."

"Yes," says he, "but you never got to Prickly-Pear Creek, and they never seen today's stage until they finds it abandoned on their way back to investigate. What I want to know is this: who was the fellers who were with you on this, Dobie?"

"That's a fair question," says a voice, and there is Cinch and Slim.

Well, Hank, there ain't no news that amounts to anything. Emmeline is coming down to the jail with a doctor pretty soon, so I'll slip her this letter to mail. She said that if I didn't reform pretty soon she'd either get her a divorce or study to be a

trained nurse. There ain't much going on here with me until after my trial. When I had a hearing the judge said that I was a confederate, and I says to him—

"Don't you know the Civil War is over?"

Then I told him it was, 'cause my dad fought all the way through it.

A lawyer spoke up and said:

"You must have started in where he left off. According to what I can hear you've been running a little goriller warfare of your own around here."

Hank, I think he meant that I'd been monkeying around. You better send all money and letters to the jail here. I need money bad, and I hope these few lines will find you the same. That detective is here in Mesquite again.

Y'rs resp'y and affectionately,

DOBIE DALTON.

Mesquite, Aug. 20.



DEAR HANK:

Things have been pretty quiet around these parts lately, but I'll drop you a line so you will know I'm still alive. I didn't wait for that trial, Hank. The night of the day I wrote you I happens to try the door of my cell, and it wasn't locked. The sheriff must have trusted me a lot, but that ain't to be surprised at, 'cause nobody can be around me for a while without knowing that I'm as square as a die. I'm the sort of a person you can trust, and not do any worrying about what I'm going to do.

Well, I walked out and looked around. On the table is a 45-70 rifle full of shells, which I borrowed, and then went outside in the dark. I hated to do it, Hank, but if I don't look out for No. 1 who will?

I went right up to Uncle Gabe's house to tell Emmeline that she don't need to come down to the jail no more, 'cause I've left there, and I finds her in the parlor with Stony Wells, and she's showing him the pictures in a photygraft album.

Hank, that makes me mad, so I busts right into the door and confronts them.

"False one!" says I. "While your dear husband and protector languishes in durance vile you make merry in the parlor with a shepherd."

They both looks at me, surprised-like, and then Stony says—

"My dear Mrs. Dalton, he sure does look

like his picture only he's a lot better looking."

See what snap judgment does, Hank? Things ain't always what they look to be, 'cause Emmeline was just showing him my picture, and telling him how much she loved me. She wanted to know how I happens to be out, and I tells her that bolts and bars can't hold me when I gets started.

Stony wants to know where I'm going, and I tells him that I'm on the road to vindicate my tarnished honor open and above-board. I asks him if that's his bronc tied to the gate, and he says yes, and I tells him thanks, 'cause I'm going to take it, and he says—

"You sure are going about it in the right way to vindicate your honor."

I says—

"You said something."

Then I kisses Emmeline good-by.

Hank, I rides out to where that hold-up occurred, and waits until daylight, and then I tracks them outlaws like a hound. The empty safe is there, so I'm certain that the money has been removed. Of course there ain't no tracks, but I puts myself in their place, and does just what I wouldn't do under the circumstances, and the trail takes me back into the hills, where I finds an old nester's cabin. It ain't used by nothing but pack-rats, and no sign that anybody has been there for a year, but just the same, Hank, I has a hunch, and under a old pile of corral poles I finds them two sacks of money.

I'm mighty elated in a way, but at that my honor ain't vindicated like it ought to be. I've found the gold, but if anybody finds me with it they'll think I stole it, and I'll be deeper in the mire than usual.

Sudden-like I thinks like this—

"Why not watch for them to try and remove it and then make them a prisoner?"

Ain't that a idea, Hank? Sometimes I wonder how I think so quick and good. Then again I thinks like this—

"Suppose they overcome me in the combat?"

Well, Hank, this is what I done: I removed the money, and hid it under a old pile of tomato cans, where nobody would look, and then I lays down to watch.

I'm hungry enough to eat fox-tail hay, but I forgets my discomfort. I got a mind what can lay aside the sufferings of the body and soul for greater things, but after a

while I got tired. I went back to my bronc, and decides to ride across the hills and see if I can find some place to get something to eat. I'm about two miles from the cabin when I runs slap into Sleepy and Blazer. They're setting in the shade of a tree, letting their broncs graze, and they seem glad to see me.

"Here is little Bright Eyes again," says Sleepy, and I says—

"You darn well know I got bright eyes," and then I got off to roll a smoke.

"Huntin' outlaws?" asks Blazer, and I says yes I am, and asked them if they were too, and they both nods.

"We ain't got a chance in the world now though," says Blazer. "With you on the trail, Dobie, there ain't no chance for ordinary mortals."

"Not very much," I agrees, and then I says: "A outlaw sure has to get up early in the morning to get ahead of me. The fellers what robbed that stage is going to have a surprise when they go to get that buried treasure."

"How so?" asks Sleepy, and I says:

"'Cause I took it out from under that pile of poles, and hid it under a pile of tin cans. That's why."

"Shake," says Blazer, "I'm proud to meet a man what is so smart. I suppose you aim to win that thousand dollar reward what is offered by the Antelope National, eh?"

"Money is no objection to me," says I. "I aim to untarnish the name of Dalton, and show folks that I'm right as rain."

Then I asks them where I can find a ranch to get something to eat, and they told me where to go. I can't find it as per their directions, so then I decides to go back and get that money and take it with me.

But, Hank, that money was gone! The pile of cans had been pawed over and the money had took wings and fled. I walked up to that cabin, thinking I might find a clew. I opens the door and walks in, and somebody shut the door behind me. That somebody was Sleepy, and over on a bunk sets Blazer.

"Now," says Blazer, "we'll listen while you tells us where you hid that money."

I says—

"Well, it ain't under them cans no more."

He says—

"That's a fact, but where is it?"

I gets mad, Hank, and I says:

"You fellers ain't no officers of no law,

and you can't intimidate me. I begins to analyze that you two was the ones what held up that stage, so I don't say boo to nobody."

Right then I makes a quick break for the door. It ain't fastened, Hank, and out I went with them right behind me.

Hank, I can run as fast as any man, and maybe a whole lot faster if the truth was known. I puts down my head and splits the breeze, and when I looks up I gets the shock of my life, 'cause I think they've outrun me, but upon a second look I sees it ain't them but it is Bob Peele and the feller what is the boss of the stage line. They're sure going a-plenty, and off across country we goes like some scared coyotes.

Well, Hank, there ain't no news, and I don't feel much like writing noways. I look for a dull season around here even if I am a busy man and have lots of responsibility. When I was running along I must have stubbed my toe and hit my head on a rock, 'cause when I came to I got a cut over my eye, and beside me, on a rock, sets that detective smoking a pipe.

"How do you feel?" he asks.

I says—

"I ain't felt yet."

And he says:

"I got some news for you, young man. Your wife is going to get her a divorce."

I says:

"If you'll read a little further down the page you'll see where I'm going to do the same. As soon as I get the reward for them robbers she'll be sorry she acted that way and feel bad about it."

"Do you know who robbed the stage?" he asks, and I says:

"Yes, but I ain't sure. I'm going to take a chance that it was Sleepy and Blazer."

Well, Hank, as I said before, there ain't no news. It seems like you have to apply for a divorce before you can get one, and they wouldn't let me apply 'cause Emmeline had beat me to it. Seems like only one member of a family can do it at the same time.

I don't know who the joke is on, Hank, but this is what the detective told me. He said that the sheriff left that door open so I could get out. They figured that I knew who held up the stage, and that if they follered me they'd find the money and outlaws. They seen me change that cache, and then laid there until Cinch and Slim showed up, and then the sheriff took them back to jail. They must have tipped it off to Bob and the stage man, 'cause they came hunting for the money about the time I busted out of that door. and if that detective ain't lying they're running yet. Cinch and Slim double-crossed us all, 'cause they're whole hogs or none and now they're none. The judge gave me a suspender sentence, and made me promise to be good.

I said to him:

"Holy smoke, old-timer, I ain't bad! I'm just unlucky, that's all."

Then old Honesty says—

"You're lucky that you didn't accident'ly shoot somebody with that gun you stole from the sheriff."

And the sheriff says—

"No luck about that, 'cause there wasn't no powder in them shells."

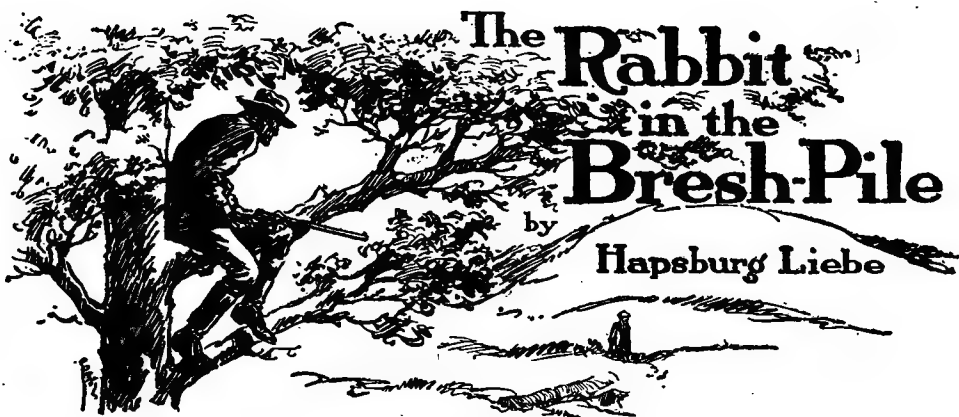
Well, Hank, as I said before, there ain't no news to write, so I will close.

Y's very resp'y and truly,

DOBIE DALTON, stage-driver of the Antelope stage, DOBIE DALTON, prop. Frate hauled.

P. S. Uncle Gabe bought out the stage line and gave it to me to run for Emmeline's sake. Emmeline says that if I can make two more round trips without getting into a fight or making a fool of myself she will consider a renewal. I ain't going to tell you nothing, Hank, but I will say this much: If it's a boy I hope he looks like me, and has my physique and initiative. Me and Emmeline are well. One of my broncs has got the colic, and I got to go see him, so will close. I hope these few lines will find you the same.





Author of "Little Pal," "Bingo," etc.

JOHN McLENDON, strapping young Tennessee mountaineer and expert timberjack, was in hot water, as the saying goes. He was exasperated to the point of desperation about one thing; and very sorely puzzled about another. To save him, he hadn't been able to land a superintendent's job, and he simply wouldn't ask Dahlia Morgan the question of questions until he was assured of a superintendent's pay; he had sworn that.

Sutton Wyrick, the smooth and mysterious city man who had been a boarder at the Big Creek logging-camp for ten days, had been holding secret talks with "Penitentiary" Tom Browder, the Big Creek country's bad, bad man, which had resulted in Browder's annoying Dahlia Morgan with patent attempts to win her confidence. It was, of course, the why of this latter-named thing that puzzled him so sorely.

There were two Tom Browders on the creek; one of them was so good that he was good for nothing, and the other had done time in the Tennessee State prison for manslaughter. The bad Tom was huge, a brute in his strength, but a coward at heart; he was black-hearted and black-haired and black-eyed, and inordinately proud of the pseudonym that distinguished him from the good-for-nothing Tom. He was bully extraordinary of the Big Creek logging outfit—with which he worked only when his purse registered but a few degrees above zero—and of the surrounding country as well.

It was on a Saturday afternoon in Midsummer, and therefore on a half-holiday,

that McLendon decided to lay his difficulties before Superintendent Jim Buchanan. He and Buchanan had little in common, but he knew his superintendent was at least honest. He found the high light of the Big Creek camp in the little office that snuggled in a down-stairs corner of the rough and unpainted boarding-house.

Buchanan turned half-way around in his desk-chair, and greeted his best worker with characteristic gruffness—

"Well, tell it!"

"The's somepin' I got to ax you, Super Jim," McLendon began. "What's Wyrick a-doin' out here?"

"Here for his health, he says," growled the man at the desk. "Why?"

McLendon lowered his voice.

"Does he haf to git as thick as mush with Penitence Browder to be healthy?"

Buchanan grinned and winked.

"Maybe," he said.

"The's somepin' else I got to ax you, Super Jim," the timberjack went on disappointedly. "I'm the best logger in this outfit; I know more about the woods and loggin' 'an you do, and you know it. I been trusted with pay-rolls lots o' times, and I ain't never lost a cent. I l'arned to read offen oatmeal packages, I know, but all the same I can read; I l'arned to write and figger after I was twenty, but I can write and figger all the same—so why is it I cain't land a super's job some'eres?"

Buchanan knew it was because logging companies looked upon him as merely a "native," but he didn't see fit to tell him. It would have hurt his feelings.

"You can search me!" exclaimed the superintendent; and with that he turned back to his unfinished time-sheet.

McLendon's step was that of one who is bitterly discouraged, when he walked out. On the long porch he met Sutton Wyrick, a spindling and sallow, youngish man with a shrewd and businesslike face; Wyrick eyed him thoughtfully as they passed.

Ten minutes later, John McLendon strode through the gang of loggers who frolicked like so many colts in the camp clearing, entered a dim and winding trail that led down the creek, and disappeared in the cool greenery of laurel undergrowth.

Dahlia Morgan was twenty, four years younger than McLendon; she was roundish of figure and fairly tall, a woman rather than a girl, and as handsome as a wild magnolia's blossom. She could remember neither of her parents, and she lived with her old and deaf paternal grandmother in a vine-covered cabin two miles down the creek. It was to this vine-covered cabin that McLendon had started.

When he reached a point within half a mile of the Morgan home, a huge man suddenly turned an almost square bend in the laurel-bordered path, halted and blocked the way. McLendon, too, stopped; he drew himself up straight as he recognized the other.

"Hello, Penitench!" he said.

"Hi," growled Penitentiary Tom.
"Which away?"

"A-follerin' my nose," clipped McLendon. Browder's manner was insolent, and it angered McLendon. "I reckon," he continued, "it ain't none o' your business where I'm a-goin'—is it?"

Browder calmly hooked a thumb in his belt, directly over his hip, thereby drawing back his coat and bringing to light a bit of steel sandwiched between two bits of polished black walnut; it was the butt of a revolver. He jerked his great and shaggy head forward and downward, and drew downward the corners of his black-bearded mouth.

"Everything's my business," he declared. "I make it my business. You're a-goin' to see Dal, hain't ye?"

McLendon half closed one clear topaz-brown eye, and answered defiantly—

"I shore am!"

"You shore ain't!" snapped Browder.

Uppermost among John McLendon's little philosophies was the belief that when

a man saw he couldn't decently avoid a clash, the sooner he struck the better it was for him. McLendon was as strong as seasoned hickory, and his quickness was like that of a panther. He made as though to adjust his broad-rimmed hat, and slapped Browder in the face with it; with the other hand he snatched Browder's revolver from its holster—and he did it all before Penitentiary Tom realized just what had happened.

The bully stared amazedly into the steel-bound hole of his own weapon, and said nothing. McLendon kept him covered and walked half-way around him.

"Listen, Penitench," he drawled coldly. "Listen to me. I'm shore a-goin' to talk Gawspel to ye now, Penitench. I don't want no trouble with ye, and I won't have it ef I can he'p it; but I'm a-goin' to see Dal any time I want to, in spite o' you and a hunderd like ye. You're mad now, Penitench; when ye git over this mad spell, I'll give ye the gun back. I don't need no gun, for because I ain't afeard o' nobody. I'll be at the boardin'-house tonight, and ye can have the gun then."

He backed away, leaving Browder looking after him sullenly. Then Browder shrugged his heavy shoulders in Latin fashion, caressed his nose where McLendon's hat had furred the skin slightly, and went on toward the camp.



THE Morgan cabin had been built on a considerable eminence above the creek, and McLendon saw Dahlia before he was within a stone's throw of the house; she stood at the gate, as though waiting for him there—and perhaps she was. Her sunlit brown hair was caught at the back of her neck with a faded baby-blue ribbon; she wore a simple dress of cheap but beautifully clean calico, and her shoes, which also were beautifully clean, were so coarse as to be hardly fit for a Congo slave. Old Granny Morgan received a small Civil War pension, and this had to pay for everything the Morgans bought.

McLendon took off his hat as he approached her, and she smiled when she saw him.

"That big pistol in ye belt—what's the idee?" she asked.

He explained modestly enough.

"Any closter to a super's job now, John?"

Dahlia murmured in childlike simplicity—that is, it seemed to be childlike simplicity; in reality, she was woman enough to very well know that he meant to ask her to marry him when he had a superintendent's pay, though he hadn't told her outright.

McLendon frowned a little when she alluded to the star to which he had hitched his wagon, and answered gloomily—

"Not the teeniest bit."

Dahlia put her hand across the gate and let it rest on his arm in a sudden eagerness of manner.

"Tom Browder," she blurted, "has jest offered me a thousand dollars—ten hundred dollars—for my thutty acres o' land! He said he could git the money in a hour, and—I shore did might' nigh it trade with him, John! Now where do ye reckon he could git a thousand dollars, John?"

"Two words will tell ye, Dal," muttered McLendon—"Sutton Wyrick."

His eyes were narrow with suspicion. He faced about and ran his gaze over the whole of Dahlia's thirty acres; they lay in an oblong basin, through which Big Creek ran; at the lower end of the basin, the stream flowed in swift narrows between two high portals of stone that had always seemed to Dahlia like some Brobdingnagian giant's gateway.

"A thousand bucks for thutty acres o' scrub and ledges, with not a good tree anywhere—over thutty-three bucks a acre for land 'at ain't no 'count at all as land!" McLendon said aloud, half to himself. He turned to Dahlia. "The's a big rabbit in the bresh-pile, Dal, as shore as green apples grows in the Summer-time!"

"The' might be, John," the young woman admitted. "But Tom he said he jest wanted to he'p me out. He said I was too—too purty to wear sech ornery clo'es as I haf to wear."

McLendon hastened to tell her that silk wasn't good enough for her.

"Like thunder, Penitench wants to he'p somebody out!" he laughed. "The copper-head, he's a-tryin' to buy this here land for Wyrick. Them two shore has been a thickenin' up, here lately. Say, the' might be a coal vein on your place, Dal; why, I'd bet my right arm ag'in a safety-pin, the' is! Listen, Dal—I'll find out the secret, and I'll let you know; and don't you sell ontel I've found out all about it, even if Penitench comes to ye with a train-

load o' money. I'll git busy right now, Dal—so long!"

"So long," smiled Dahlia, "and good luck!"

McLendon almost ran back to the logging-camp; he was fairly itching to put into effect a tiny plan of more or less promise that had occurred to him. And as he went, he tightened up a little on his determination not to ask Dahlia until he was assured of a superintendent's pay.



THE Summer sun was low over the western mountain, the mountain that stood between the Big Creek logging operations and Johnsville in the lowland, when he reached the camp. The other loggers were still frolicking in the clearing; Wyrick and Penitentiary Tom stood with folded arms and watched them absently, while they talked of a thing that concerned timberjack horse-play not at all. McLendon went straight to the odd but strangely intimate pair, and touched Browder on the shoulder. Browder turned toward him with a wary and unbeauteous grin.

"Here's ye gun, which same I borrowed," McLendon said easily, passing the revolver to its owner. "I'm a heap obliged to ye, Penitench. I never seed no snakes, by the way. You, Mr. Wyrick—le' me have a word with ye in private, ef ye don't mind. Humph?"

Wyrick glanced at Browder, then he walked away with McLendon. The two went to a log that lay at the edge of the clearing, and there sat down.

"I take it you're a business man, Mr. Wyrick," began the mountaineer, "and 'at savin' time is about half o' ye religion. It'll shore save ye a lot o' time ef ye'll come clean with Dal Morgan and tell her why ye're so anxious to pay her so much money for a little bunch o' ground what's too danged pore to raise a fuss on. I've app'inted myself her—er, her lawful adviser, and ye can jest tell me. Humph?"

Wyrick's countenance was blank. He was no expert land-buyer, perhaps, but he was a good actor. The one flicker he made now was in looking for a second toward Penitentiary Tom, who stood eying them covertly from his little distance.

"I beg pardon," he muttered, "but I don't understand. That is, I—I don't quite get you."

"You won't git, Dal Morgan's thutty acres, neither," said McLendon. "It's Gawspel I'm-a-talkin' now. You can onderstand that, cain't ye?"

Wyrick gave John McLendon one more blank stare, rose and went toward Penitentiary Tom Browder.

Dahlia Morgan's greatest friend rose, too. He threw a hasty look over his shoulder and toward the dying July sun, and set out at a rapid walk down the narrow-gage logging railroad that led to the lowland and to Johnsville. He would have, he told himself, all of the day following, it being Sunday, in which to find out who and what Sutton Wyrick was; he had jumped at the conclusion that Wyrick hailed from Johnsville.

He reached the little city, around late bedtime that night, went to a cheap lodging-house and took up temporary quarters there. On the next morning, he learned that Wyrick was from Richmond, and nothing more than that, and he was disappointed. Then he called upon a man named Hutchins who was a mineralogist and a coal expert, whom he had met on a number of occasions in the hills; he wrung from him the promise to go over Dahlia's land on the following day and paid him in advance for his services, and set out for Big Creek in time to reach the Morgan cabin a little before nightfall.

After he had had supper with Dahlia and her deaf old grandmother, McLendon hastened on to the camp and arranged with Super Jim Buchanon to be left to his own devices for some thirty-six hours longer.

On Monday, the expert and John McLendon had covered almost three-fourths of the rocky basin, when they found, wedged between two ledges above one bank of the creek, a small pocket of coal. McLendon was ready to cry out in his delight, when Hutchins turned upon him with eyes that were distinctly pitying.

"That is not a natural formation," said Hutchins. "It's been salted in; that is to say, the coal has been placed here in the attempt to deceive somebody and sell the land for many times its value. It's a cheap trick, and as futile and foolish as it is cheap."

The mountaineer's face went sober and seemed to freeze there. Dahlia guilty of

such a thing? He wouldn't even consider it.

"Hold on, mister," he said crisply. "Dal wouldn't do that, and the man who wants to buy the land shorely wouldn't do it, and nobody else has got any int'rest in it. That's Gawspel, Mr. Hutchins."

"Figure it out for yourself," the expert replied. "I can tell you only that there is no sign of coal or any valuable mineral on this property, except for that ten cents' worth of black stuff in that pocket. I've done what I came to do, and I've been paid for it, so it seems that our business together is over, eh?"

"Yeuh," nodded McLendon. "You're now at liberty to do anything you want to do, 'cept to hint 'at Dal Morgan ain't as hawnest a gyurl as God has yit made."

Hutchins went to his horse, mounted and rode toward the lowland. The mountaineer went to the old cabin that overlooked the rocky basin, met Dahlia on the porch and told her everything.

When the young woman had heard it all, she stared silently and soberly at McLendon for a full minute. Certain roseate hopes she had entertained were dashed down and broken now, and she was hurt to the quick.

"John," she said, "somebody who wanted to be a friend to me has put that coal on my place, and it's got Wyrick fooled. Maybe it'd sarve him right ef I was to take his ten hunderd dollars—ten hunderd dollars, how much it would buy—t-t-take his ten hunderd dollars for them thutty acres o' scrub and ledges; but I ain't a-goin' to do it. I've lived white, pore that I allus was, and by the grace o' the good Lord I'm a-goin' to die white. You go and tell that man Wyrick about that pocket a-bein' jest—a fake, John. And, John, I'm much obliged to you, shorely."

McLendon rose without a word, and started for the gate. Dahlia herself was no more keenly disappointed than was he; he had so wished to see her rise out of the poverty that had pinched her since her babyhood. If only he could get a super's job, and have a super's pay!



WHEN he arrived at the Big Creek camp's boarding-house, he found Penitentiary Tom Browder lounging on the porch. Browder was not working, which was a sure sign that he

had some money on his person, and McLendon might easily have guessed where he got it. Browder eyed McLendon sourly as he walked up the steps. One of those moments when he was fairly aching to be into some devilment was upon Penitentiary Tom. He had been drinking much fiery moonshine whisky of his own make.

"Where's Wyrick?" asked McLendon.

"I ain't his keeper," Browder said in a voice full of defiance and surliness. "I ain't like you. I don't go around a-pokin' my nose into other people's business, like you do. Ef ye say ye don't, ye've lied."

McLendon had reached the porch floor. He tightened his lips and narrowed his gaze; he was in no mood now for taking insults from anybody, and especially from a man whom he disliked as cordially as he disliked the bully of the Big Creek country. He looked straight into the beady black eyes of Browder until those beady black eyes shifted, then he spoke.

"Look here, Penitench. The's one man in this neighborhood what you ain't never cowed down yit, and I'm him. Git that. Jam it into ye pipe and smoke it. Ef you've got anything ag'in' me, le's settle it; le's have it out. I'm ready right now. Are you?"

Penitentiary Tom rose and appeared to be weighing the matter. The challenger went on, quick hill-anger aflame in his breast.

"You think I been a-pokin' my nose into Wyrick's land trade. I have, maybe. And whomsomever don't like it, about me a-doin' that, let him he'p hisself ef he can. I can tell ye this, Penitench: ef that land o' Dal's was mine, I'd shore let Wyrick have it for a thousand bucks, jest to punish him for a-runnin' with a polecat o' your stripe. But it happens Dal is better'n me. Well, I can see you're might' nigh it a-bustin' to say somepin', Penitench; why don't ye say it, and have it over? Do ye want to fight it out? I can fight, all right, but I never could sulk!"

A score of loggers had come in from the woods in time to hear the latter part of this little speech of McLendon's, and they halted around the steps and eyed the belligerents in both surprise and deep interest. The half-drunken Penitentiary Tom's confidence in his ability to whip McLendon, and a dozen wildcats thrown

in for good measure—with a gun—was at high tide; new corn whisky is a wonderful booster of self-confidence. He stood smiling a queer, twisted smile and surveyed McLendon much as though McLendon were a horse that he contemplated purchasing.

Then Browder deliberately and with malice aforethought, spat upon the front of the challenger's blue shirt, and at the same time went to his hip and came back with a big handful of steel and polished black walnut.

McLendon seized the revolver almost before it was clear of its holster—there was a sharp struggle for the possession of it, and when Browder pulled the trigger the bullet tore its way harmlessly through the floor of the porch. In another moment, McLendon had wrenched the weapon from its owner's hands and hurled it into the near-by creek; the next instant saw him drive a terrific left to the butt of Browder's jaw, and Browder fell straight, as a tree falls!

"You coward!" panted John McLendon, standing over the bully's supine form. "You low-down, danged coward!"

That one crashing blow whipped Penitentiary Tom. Whipped him for the first time in his misspent life, and humiliated him as he had not before been humiliated; had not twenty loggers seen it? He rose slowly, spat blood, gave McLendon a long and sinister look of black hatred, insane hatred, and walked sluggishly off.

Super Jim Buchanon had been a witness to most of the mix-up. He whispered to the victor:

"Better watch your step from now on, John. If you're not mighty careful, Penitench will get you from the laurels. He got one man from the laurels, you know."

There were times when McLendon knew how to fear certain danger, but this was not one of them. With the intention of delivering to Wyrick the oral message from Dahlia concerning her stony acres, he began to look for the Richmond man, and he failed to find him.



SUTTON WYRICK was at that moment at the cabin of the Morgans; had not McLendon taken a shorter but rougher route than the used creek trail, he would have met him half an hour before. Wyrick was standing

at the gate, and Dahlia was standing on the other side of it; he was subtly—he thought—trying his hand where that of Tom Browder had failed signally.

"I won't beat ye this away," Dahlia told him. "You think the's coal on this place, but the' hain't none. I won't beat you, Mr. Wyrick. Some friend o' mine must ha' put that coal there; I think I know who it was, and God bless him for a-tryin' to he'p me! But—but I cain't hardly fo'give him for a-doin' it!"

The Richmond man looked as though he had seen a bona-fide dancing ghost. Business had made him hard, and it was something new to find a person who flatly refused to take advantage of him in a deal; it gave him a sudden new faith in mankind, and softened him as he had never before expected to be softened.

"Miss Morgan," he said to her finally, "I don't think I'll lose anything by explaining a—er—a little matter, and by—er—making an apology to you, and I'm sure I'll feel better for having apologized. I put that coal-pocket there. With me it's always been a case of bite or be bitten, you see. After you refused to sell for a thousand, I figured it this way: you wished to know just why Tom Browder wanted the land, and you were going to have it examined for coal or minerals; then I figured that after you'd found my pocket and discovered it was worthless, you'd try to beat me and put a price of about fifteen hundred on the basin.

"I very humbly apologize for having—er—sized you up like that. I've made lots of mistakes here, I find. First, I enlisted the aid of Tom Browder, because I thought he could buy you out cheaper than I could, being—er—a native; second, I believed Browder when he said the basin was easily worth a thousand as tobacco land.

"I am working under orders, Miss Morgan," he continued, "and I'm hardly at liberty to tell you why I—er—why I want this basin; but I'll give you two thousand dollars for it!"

Dahlia's eyes widened, brightened, strayed down to her poor, coarse shoes. She was tempted! But she held herself firmly.

"I reckon I'll wait," she said, "ontel I've talked with John McLendon."

And, though Wyrick tried all manner of persuasion, he could get nothing more

out of her. He should have known that to pique a woman's curiosity as he had piqued Dahlia's would be fatal to anything except that curiosity itself! But he didn't know, evidently, and when he left her at dusk he was, as the saying goes, up a tall tree.

Penitentiary Tom Browder was up a tall tree too, and literally. It was a leaning hickory, with convenient branches all the way up to where he sat with a Winchester rifle in his hands. From his position in mid-air, he could cover all of an open space in which a single-log bridge crossed one of Big Creek's many chasmal narrows; McLendon, he reasoned, would walk that way shortly, to see Dahlia.

He had no great cause for having come to such a conclusion, but Dahlia's big friend did walk that way soon. Twilight was just fading into darkness when Penitentiary Tom saw McLendon's tall, dim form approaching the foot-log; he balanced himself in the tree, lifted his rifle carefully, and drew a bead the height of a tall man's breast over the center of the narrow bridge, and he ground his teeth in insensate rage while he waited.

It was fast growing dark, and Browder's eyes were somewhat blurred from drinking—and when the slender figure of Sutton Wyrick suddenly appeared before his rifle's sights, Browder fired!

"Got ye!" he taunted. "Yah! Yah!"

Wyrick wavered and sank slowly, trying desperately to keep his balance, his hands clutching uncertainly at the log. John McLendon knew what had happened when the quick flash of the Winchester snapped upon the palimpsest of his brain; he dashed forward to save Wyrick, crying out as he went—

"Penitench—you dawg!"

As he bent over to seize the Richmond man's shoulder, Wyrick slipped downward and into the rushing dark waters. Came twice more in quick succession the keen thunder of Browder's rifle, and one of these bullets passed through and through John McLendon's body. But McLendon hardly noticed it then. He sprang into the swift current of Big Creek, swam hard and found the limp body of Sutton Wyrick, and entered determinedly upon the difficult task of keeping Wyrick's nose and mouth and his own out of the waters until they came to lower banks.

Dazedly he knew they were somewhere in Dahlia's basin, when at last they reached banks that were lower. With all the strength left in him, he dragged the insensible Wyrick and himself out of the stream; then he called the name of Dahlia just once, and sank unconscious beside the man whose life he had saved.

Ten minutes later, Dahlia came with a lantern, and found them.



DAYS passed before McLendon realized things clearly again. In his mind there were haunting, taunting memories of strange faces, strange white beds, strange women in pale-blue dresses and long white aprons and small white headgear. He lay on his back, and when he looked upward now he found himself staring at one of these women in pale blue and white. The woman then turned and beckoned, and a tall man who wore nose-glasses and a pointed brown beard bobbed up beside her like a jack-in-a-box.

"Hospital?" McLendon mumbled weakly.

His weakness surprised and worried him.

The man of the nose-glasses nodded and smiled.

"You must be very quiet, and lie very still, McLendon. Yes, you are in the hospital at Johnsville. You lost a great deal of blood, both outside and inside, and we had to operate for that on the inside. Remember, if you are very quiet, and if you lie very still, you'll be absolutely all right."

"Wyrick?" McLendon mumbled.

"He's on his feet. The bullet only cut a furrow in his skull."

"Dal?"

The doctor and the nurse exchanged glances.

"He means Miss Morgan," said the nurse.

"She's waiting in the reception-room now; shall I bring her?"

"If," decided the physician, "McLendon will let her do the talking. Will you, McLendon? Will you promise that you won't say more than ten words while she's visiting you this time?"

The mountaineer nodded, and the nurse

left. So did the doctor, and when Dahlia Morgan sat down at McLendon's bedside, they were the only two persons in that particular corner of the ward. McLendon wondered why her face was so joyously radiant—when he lay there as utterly helpless as a new-born babe! He soon knew.

"I'm so glad to know for sure you're goin' to git well, John—though I never did believe you was a-goin' to die!" she told him in a voice that was pretty well broken up. She hastened on: "So many things has happened sence Super Jim brung you and me and Mr. Wyrick down here on the loggin'-injinie, John. Listen, and I'll tell ye. Mr. Wyrick's comp'ny sent another man down here to see why Mr. Wyrick hadn't got my land—and I sold it to 'em! I axed the loggin' people what they'd take for their outfit on Big Creek, and they said eight thousand. I got 'em down to seven thousand, and then I axed Mr. Wyrick seven thousand for my land—and, John, he paid it! Then I bought the Big Creek loggin' outfit, and you're a-goin' to be the superintendent there—you've got your super job at last, John!"

McLendon calmly counted off five of the doctor's allowance of ten words, and uttered them—

"Will ye marry me, Dal?"

Her answer was a jewel—

"I shorely will."

She ran on:

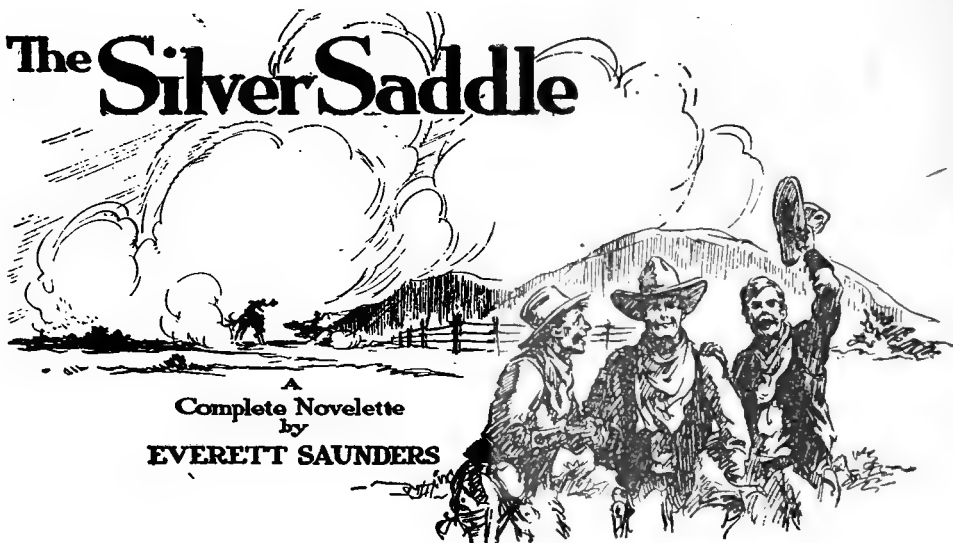
"John, you couldn't never guess what they wanted with my pore old rocky land. They're a-goin' to make a dam out o' that basin, and put in machinery to make 'lectric lights for this town—it was the only good dam site anywheres around here. Mr. Wyrick he said it was a reg'lar jaybird of a dam site. Say, John, they found Penitench Browder a-layin' onder a hick'ry tree, dead with his neck broke; some says he must ha' fell out, him a-bein' up there to shoot at you. Well, thank goodness I—we—you won out; they didn't beat me out o' my land a little bit, did they, honey?"

McLendon smiled. He had five words left, and he chose them with great care.

"Not by a dam site," he said; and he winked one clear topaz-brown eye.



The Silver Saddle



A
Complete Novelette
by
EVERETT SAUNDERS

ON A night in the fore part of June of the year 1912—that is to say, about the time the bronco-busters and the would-be bronco-busters of the Northwest were getting ready for the second Pendleton round-up—"Brownie" Snyder sat on the edge of his bunk listening to the heavy breathing of the five other occupants of the room, thinking. Brownie was on the pay-roll of the Lazy S. He was regularly paid for roping, for using a marking-knife and branding-iron, and for riding long days and nights in sun, wind, rain, and black darkness; but he wasn't paid for thinking. And since it had not been his habit wantonly to exercise his mind beyond the limits of necessity, it seemed he could hear his brain creaking like a new saddle as he rode it around the plan he was forming.

Three hours previously that young man had returned from Luke Bowman's ranch. He was still aquiver from the most severe mental shake-up of his twenty-two years of life. The fact that he had tied his steaming horse in the stable without blanketing him and had attempted to kick off his chaps without first divesting his boots of the spurs with the two-and-a-half-inch shanks was eloquent evidence of the abnormality of his state of mind.

Luke Bowman's big log dwelling had always been an open house to him; and the road between that place and the Lazy S had suffered more or less from his pony's

hoofs except during nine months of each of the four years Jenny Bowman had spent at Enterprise attending high school. Brownie had thought he knew Luke Bowman but on this occasion had seen him in a new light.

For the first time in their long acquaintance the grizzled rancher had got down to brass tacks in a talk. Heretofore it had never entered Brownie's head that Bowman doubted his girls' abilities to form correct judgments for themselves, having seemed always to take their affairs in a non-serious way, and habitually making rough jokes at their expense.

Bowman had chosen a really inopportune or opportune—time for the delivery of his ultimatum. It had no less an effect than the prevention of an important proposal which Brownie had come with the express purpose of making. It seemed that Bowman in some occult manner had learned of the expenditure of twelve borrowed dollars for a ring and had taken this course to keep the ring from its proper destination.

A younger daughter, Belle, had paved the way to the discussion by a sally at the supper table. With wide, malicious eyes searching the familiar guest's face from each side of the spoon in her coffee cup, she said:

"You'd better be careful, Brownie, or this new fellow, Jack Morse, will be beatin' your time. He was awful pop'lar with Jenny at the dance at Landers while you was away."

This sort of thing was always effective in routing the boy's repartee. He could only mumble and feel the hot blood rushing up under his tan.

While the girls were clearing the table and doing the dishes, Luke Bowman and his guest repaired to the porch. The rancher opened a particular blade of his stock-knife, shaved a handful of a powerful sedative from a black plug he carried in a hind pocket, and loaded his old brier. Brownie produced a bag of tobacco and a book of brown papers and deftly fashioned a cigaret.

The young man had lighted and puffed half his cigaret into blue smoke and ashes before the other had completed his preparations and was struggling with the obdurately burning tobacco in his pipe. With disconcerting suddenness Bowman turned upon him, speaking in a guarded voice.

"I've got somethin' to say, Brownie," he began, glancing toward the door, "an' there ain't no use beatin' about the bush. It's about—well, it's about all such affairs in general. Now, I ain't got nothin' ag'in you, understand, you personally. You're all right. You're straight, an' all that. But if I know how to size up a situation—an' I reckon I do, havin' had my sparkin' days when I was young—it's time for me to git off what I've got on my chest.

"You're all right, but you're workin' for puncher's wages; an' goin' along in the same line you ain't got, scarcely, no chances for advancement. What I mean is before a man thinks of marryin' in this day an' age, he ought to have somethin' in sight. I don't mean he ought to have a fortune, but he ought to have some prospects. There ain't the chances for a man there was twenty years ago. So—well, that's all I had to say. Before this goes any farther, show me you've got somethin' up your sleeve better than punchin' cows."

Brownie, struck utterly dumb and unable to fashion a reasonable reply in his whirling brain, heard with unutterable relief the voices of the girls coming down the hallway.

An hour later, without having waited to sit out the old folks as was his usual custom, Brownie rode away toward the Lazy S; and being in such an irregular, unsettled state of mind, pushed his horse at a furious pace along the barbed wire lane. This

useless overtaking of his pony wasn't due to wantonness. The fact is, Brownie was seeking an inspiration and an augmentation of his depleted self-confidence.

There is that in a gallop under the stars—for one particularly who has ridden through childhood and adolescence, until the natural straightness of his legs has given way to the curve of a horse's body—there is that which is more lifting to the blood than wine. To Brownie a horse under him seemed properly a part of him. The great muscles, the boundless strength and vitality of the beast were his own. On a horse he felt a stronger, surer man.

The animal was fresh and full of life and fire, with limbs supple and quick with youth. He gripped with his knees and touched the hairy sides lightly with his spurs—not a torturing prod, but a touch as light as a verbal command. The tensed muscles quivered beneath him, the flying hoofs spurned the ground, the wind sang in his ears. Half his uncertainty left him as under the star-flecked sky, through the witchery of the night, he thundered down the moon-white stretch of road.

The inspiration he sought was half his own when he swung to the ground at the Lazy S gate. Snarled details were straightening themselves in his mind as he pulled down hay for his unblanketed horse and struggled with the chaps which were not wide enough to slip off over the spurs.

During the three swift hours he had sat on the bunk staring at the pale rectangle of window opposite him, he had completed the plan. "Shorty" Steelman's obstreperous snoring had been only a droning accompaniment to his thoughts and had not been sufficient to distract him.

He had taken mental invoice of his assets. Two horses he had who were deep in his affections but of indifferent monetary value; a favorite saddle of good design but well worn; a pair of woolly chaps which represented a recent purchase; and a bridle with a silver-mounted bit. Besides these, he had coming something over a month's wages. And he was twelve dollars in debt—for a ring.



FRANKLY, with the awakening and the change of view-point incidental to the last few hours, he admitted the justness of Luke Bowman's contentions.

"I've punched cows ever since I was big enough to straddle a bronc," his thoughts ran, "an' I ain't got nothin' yet. Wright Anson didn't git to own the Lazy S by stickin' to cow-punchin'. Can't support a wife on forty-five a month. Besides, can't keep a wife in a bunk-house. Yes, sir," and this resolution was the climax of his constructive thinking, "I've got to grab that piece of Gover'ment land and go to raisin' cattle for myself."

It is significant that in the formation of his plans, Brownie's mind traversed no other fields of economic endeavor than ranching. All the money he had ever seen had come indirectly out of the ground, first in the form of alfalfa or bunch grass, then in the rounded, fat-padded bodies of steers. When he thought of a wealthy man, he visioned the holder of an unquestioned title to a far-reaching band of cattle—a band of cattle that blackened a valley, that surged along with the dust eddying upward in clouds from their hoofs, their hoarse bellows burdening the air.

It is notable, also, that when he decided to file on a tract of land, he thought of *that* piece instead of merely *a* piece. Unlike a newcomer to the range, it was not necessary for him to explore all the open country before deciding on the most suitable location. He had been literally over every yard of the ground within a radius of fifty miles. A panorama of the hills and flats and gulches was photographed on his mind. Rapidly he had run over the files of his memory and had chosen *that* piece.

That tract was the choicest three hundred and twenty of five hundred acres of rank sage-brush rooted in loam. It lay in a gentle slope to the south where the hill walls of a shallow gulch bulged outward for a space, narrowing again at the upper and lower ends and forming a little circular valley.

Down the center of the valley, where the Spring freshets ran, were splashes of willows advertising moisture close to the surface, and at the lower extremity was a spring surrounded by a quaking-aspen grove. Just over the ridge in the next gulch flowed a small stream which a few miles of ditch would lead into the valley. All around, reaching clear to the blue, timbered mountains on the horizon, was the open range.

The only drawback to the place that

Brownie could think of lay in the fact it was so far from the nearest settlement that a hungry coyote couldn't send his voice more than half-way on the loneliest night God ever made. His mind ranged through the same cycle several times, each time discarding or elaborating details, and at last the plan seemed complete.

"Well," he said to himself, as he turned into his blankets, "I ain't a cowpuncher no more. I'm goin' out after something bigger than forty-five a month and my chuck."

He was two parts asleep when he drew the covers over his body.

II



TWO minutes later, so short seemed the dreamless four hours, the big bell was ringing, and Shorty Steelman with a final snort ceased sawing wood and jerked half his six-feet-four to a sitting posture in his bunk. He spent a short moment getting his bearings, then leaped from his bed and jerked all of Brownie's five-feet-nine to an upright posture of unstable equilibrium.

"Wake up! Wake up!" he exclaimed in answer to the other's sleepy protests. "For many years I've been laborin' with my noble examples to impress upon you that nights was made to sleep in an' days to earn your wages in. I can't seem to succeed in learnin' you the sleepin' part, but blanked if I don't persist in regard to the wages.

Brownie opened his eyes, yawned, and grinned.

"All right, Shorty. As I have said before, when not in a fightin' frame of mind, you're a noble character. I've got to hand it to you for my salvation if I'm ever saved."

"No chance," said Shorty. "Howsomever your appreciation does my ol' heart good."

Breakfast over, Snyder sought the foreman.

"Mark," he said, "what's the chances for a week's lay-off an' what I've got comin'?"

"Sure," agreed the genial Mark White. "Things ain't so rushin' just now. I can let you off for a few days. But what's the idea—if it's any of my business?"

"Oh, I've just got a little proposition I want to look into," Brownie countered indefinitely.

His knowledge of the ranch company made him chary of any admissions to feed its barbed wit.

"What's this?" Shorty Steelman was standing a few feet away rolling a cigaret. "Runnin' off just when we're goin' to have a little fun!"

"A little fun?" Brownie queried.

"Sure. Ain't you heard? Morse an' Patterson's Wild West Show outfit moved in a couple of days back, while you was ridin' on the Minam. They're camped down by Lancer's. They've dropped over here to buy up some horses. This Morse is the guy that grabbed off the saddle in the buckin' contest at Pendleton last Fall. He's got a little travelin' Wild West Show like Dick Stanley rigged out after he spoiled Steamboat's reputation at Cheyenne in '07 or '08, the champion's reputation bein' the main drawin' card. He takes his whole outfit to Pendleton in the Fall—in fact, he takes in all the rodeos, Los Angeles, Salinas, Elko, Cheyenne, all of 'em.

"They're over here to pick up some buckers. They'll buy any horse that can buck better'n the average and's got the guts to keep it up. The meaner they are an' the higher they can hop the more they're worth. They've heard of that bunch in Anson's string that we spoiled and learned to buck for Sunday entertainment. There's Irish, little Buckin' Ben, ol' Sunfish Molly, Blatherskite, Rattlesnake, and the rest of 'em. When we git 'em hazed in Morse'll try 'em out here at the ranch. Then we'll see a little fun."

"If they take Buckin' Ben to Pendleton," the foreman added, "an' if I know anything about buckin' bronses, he'll be there when they see him *wampoo* once. You'd better go up an' try for the saddle, Brownie. You sure have got that plug's number. You made about the oiliest ride on him that day he spilled Montana Kid I ever seen."

"Don't kid me," Snyder protested with a show of modesty. "Montana had him tired before I stepped across him."

"Aw, can that," said Shorty. "Whenever anybody takes the notion to brag on you a little, you'd better appreciate it. It don't happen very often."

"Ain't that the truth! If you guys'd lay off the devilment, I'd be tickled to death to stagger along without the blarney stuff. Of course, I know it's a fact there ain't a horse this side of the Rockies ever

seen the day I couldn't paw him all over, as long as he stayed on his feet. So there ain't no use bein' told about it."

"Oh, Lawd, Mark!" Shorty groaned, simulating a collapse. "I knowed you'd git him started! But all kiddin' aside," said Shorty, with a pretense of seriousness, "I'm your friend, you'll have to admit that. I was just tryin' to keep you here in this locality till this man Morse is gone. That guy, when he wants to put on some class, rides the swellest saddle a man ever laid eyes on. An' you know how it is—girls is strong for this hero stuff. I wanted you to stay here so's you could hold up your end of the affair as well as you could till he gits gone."

By the time he finished, Brownie was out of earshot, walking toward the stables.

He saddled one of his horses. For the other he unostentatiously borrowed a pack-saddle from the ranch store-house. He steered clear of the curiosity-smitten Shorty Steelman and took the road to Enterprise at a swinging trot.

At Lancer's he passed the camp of the Morse and Patterson show. There were a number of tents for the members of the company, an improvised canvas stable for the saddle horses; and in a large corral, eating hay from improvised racks, was a band of more or less unprepossessing-looking outlaws. With a degree of curiosity, Brownie considered as he passed the loud-shirted and sombreroed men moving among the horses, and mildly wondered which was the man whose feat of sitting Long Tom for a hundred seconds the year before had made him a "drawin' card."

His attention was drawn from the feed-lot and from the men—who were only bronco busters after all, real or theatrical and commonplace enough at the best—to a young woman in a picturesque cowgirl garb, who was not only a member of the sex which is never commonplace to the young and unspoiled man, but who was striking in her own right. Inside an adjoining corral she had mounted a big shaggy-maned brown horse who, the moment she touched the saddle, began walking on his hind legs and making all kinds of superfluous movements not expected of a saddle animal.

"It's a shame to put a girl on a locoed mustang like that," was Brownie's thought, as the animal, displaying the viciousness

of the spoiled horse, reared and plunged, fighting for the bit.

After a moment, however, he seemed to see the need of amending his judgment. The girl was apparently able to uphold her part of the argument.



THE horse had circled the corral, lunging fiercely. Opposite the gate the rider caught one rein up short, and with an exhibition of strength surprising in so small a person, doubled him, bringing him up short. The beast reared and stood for a long moment on his hind legs, threatening to fall backward and forcing the girl to slacken the reins, then suddenly leaped out and hurled himself straight toward the plank gate with the speed of a catapult.

At the gate he never swerved, but leaping high and far breasted the topmost planks with all his weight and momentum. The gate bent outward and gave way with a crash, smashing into a mass of broken fragments.

How the horse kept his feet is a wonder explicable only by the natural cat-footedness of the cayuse. He struck the ground, staggered to his knees, regained his footing in a flash, and tore away.

Brownie saw with horror that it had left its bridle in the wreckage of the gate. A jagged board-end had caught in the head stall and torn it away bodily. Bridleless and utterly ungovernable, the horse lunged out and took the road, speeding with the reckless abandon of the runaway.

The showmen made a general dash for saddle-horses with the assurance of a belated start in the race.

Brownie went instantly into action. He dropped the rope of his pack animal, touched his horse with spurs, and took the road behind the runaway at full speed. Carefully, without checking his mount, he unfasted his coiled lariat from his saddle and shook out a tiny noose. With the loop held lightly in his right hand, he spurred after the flying horse.

He was not far behind at the beginning, possibly ten yards. But he could not gain. The girl's horse was not fast, nor was his own. It happened that they were merely two ordinary cayuses evenly matched in speed.

The girl looked back. Her face was white, but she was collected and apparently unafraid.

"I'm sorry to be so unsociable," her voice came back on the wind above the thunder of the hoofs, "but I'm in a dreadful hurry!"

A quarter of a mile farther on, Brownie remembered, the wire-bordered lane broke sharply to one side. He knew it was more than probable that the maddened beast would never swerve from his course to make the turn, but would senselessly hurl himself upon the five strands of murderous wire to his own and his rider's destruction.

Snyder set his teeth. He leaned forward upon his horse's withers and put every atom of his skill as a rider at the disposal of the animal; but still he did not gain. Like the deer and the hounds in the "Lady of the Lake," he held just those two fatal leaps behind.

"Wobble in your saddle!" he shouted to the girl. "Throw him off his stride!"

But either she did not hear or she had seen the cross lane with its border of barbed-wire against which she was being carried and had lost her head, for she sat the runaway with instinctive grace, nullifying the rescuer's efforts to lend his own horse advantage.

Brownie groaned involuntarily as he accepted the only possible course. He shook out the noose to a wider circumference. Carefully, without lessening the speed at which he was traveling, he reined his horse gradually to one side, so as not to be directly behind her. Then with a kind of silent prayer, he whirled the lariat three times and cast it out.

The distended noose soared before him, menaced the girl, slid past, and, as the last of the coil paid out, settled over the head of the running horse.

The boy gasped with relief as he carefully took his turns on the horn of his saddle. He began gradually checking his horse in order to run down the terrific momentum without endangering the footing of the flying horses.

The runaway, strangling, was brought to a stop. The girl slid to the ground and loosened the noose from its neck. She deftly fashioned a swimming halter from the rope and prepared to remount.

"Better let me ride him back," Brownie counseled. "He ain't safe."

"He will be all right now," she said, swinging into the saddle. "He's had plenty for one morning."

And, true enough, the horse, winded by his run, went along quietly.

Brownie's attitude toward the girl was a complex of admiration and curiosity. Despite the rounded curves of her body, she seemed immature in the short riding-skirt and the tiny boots. She seemed such a child to be a member of a show troupe whose ordinary day's work was a risk of life and limb.

She turned, met one of his glances squarely, and smiled.

"You're no slouch with a rope yourself," she complimented him. "To my mind, to be able to deliver the goods in a pinch like that shows more real ability than to be able merely to spin a rope and walk in and out of a noose."

Irrelevantly Brownie's mind leaped to the desirability of following her show as one of the company.

"I can do a few of them fancy stunts myself," he said. "I wonder what's the chances of gittin' on with your show?"

"I'd be almost willing to give you my place," she said. "I've been trying to coax my father to sell his interest and go ranching again. You would soon be tired of it. I am. This riding broncos is all right," she stated dogmatically, "when it's part of the life on a ranch, but it's cruel and unnecessary when horses are tortured into bucking day after day, just for fun."

"Don't you ride in the performances?" he asked.

"I ride sometimes," she admitted. "I can get by, though I'm no Tillie Baldwin. My part is mainly trick-riding with Jack Morse."

Far up the lane appeared the forms of horsemen galloping.

"There come the boys," the girl smiled. "If it hadn't been for you, they sure would have been too late to do me any good—except, perhaps, to pick up the pieces."

As he looked at her Brownie felt a most illogical envy of Jack Morse. There was such a warmth of color in the tawny skin of her face and arms, such redness in her lips. It was with a sense of guilt that he remembered the ring he had neither paid for nor used. Realizing his fickleness, he withdrew his thoughts from the glamour of a gipsy show life to the stern plan of the homestead in the solitude where he was to hew out a fortune.

The group of riders, all but one of them bareback, galloped up to them. The exception was some distance behind, apparently having waited to throw a saddle on his horse.

"All right?" the mob demanded in a breath.

"Don't I look all right?" the girl countered. "I am, but no thanks to you. Look at Jack back there tearing along. Of course he had to wait and get his prize saddle. To save my life while bareback wouldn't be spectacular enough for him."



JACK MORSE reined his horse up beside them. He was dressed in the moving-picture cowboy way—ornate boots, bespangled chaps, flaming shirt, silk muffler draped with studied carelessness around his neck, and abnormally wide hat. He gave Brownie the impression of being more than a little vain.

His face, however, was expressive of force. It was not a bad-looking countenance except for the eyes, which were too close together and hard for comfort. He looked as if he had been around and knew something of the ways of mice and men. He wasn't riding the prize saddle, however.

"My goodness, Jack!" the girl exclaimed. "Where is the saddle?"

Morse flushed but disdained to answer.

It was easily seen that the two disliked each other. Brownie noted that while Miss Patterson kept up a banter with the other men, Morse did not join in the talk.

At the camp he found his pack-horse grazing unconcernedly in a fence corner. He received his lariat from the girl, coiled it carefully on his saddle, and resumed his interrupted journey toward Enterprise.

III



AT SUNDOWN Snyder and the surveyor he had hired at Enterprise rode up to the quaking-aspen grove at the mouth of the little valley and dismounted at the spring. The cowboy, none the worse for the hard ride, immediately busied himself with the horses, first unsaddling and hobbling his own mount, then throwing off the "squaw" hitch from the pack.

The young man in khaki and puttees swung down and stamped stiffly about to restore circulation to his cramped legs.

At the margin of the grove he stood for a time looking over the five hundred acres of gray valley. He came back to assist with the raising of the camp tent.

"What do you think of it?" Snyder asked.

"Geologically speaking," the engineer said dryly, "it is an eminently desirable piece of land. But it is sadly lacking in transportation facilities."

The two were at work in the morning before the shadow of the hill had lifted. Brownie used the ax, clearing brush from the course of the transit in low places; he carried stones for cairns; he pulled an end of the chain, and attended generally to those portions of the task which required no expert knowledge. Donneley did the hard work with his eyes on the delicate cross hairs of his transit.

In mid-afternoon they were working along one side of the valley, driving a line as straight as a home-bound bee would fly if he lived up to his reputation. They crossed shallow gulches, cut through patches of sunflowers, slashed down bunches of fragrant purple sage. The engineer laughed when Brownie dropped his battered ax and mopped his face after hacking an opening through a tangle of tough bushes.

"How do you like it?" he asked.

"It's as hard as roping cayuses," Snyder grinned, "and not near as much fun."

A low rumble came to their ears. Looking northward they saw a band of loose horses streaming over the ridge at the head of the valley. At the long tireless trot of the range horse, they poured down upon the flat, milled into a rough circle, and stood, heads up and ears forward, looking back over their trail.

"There's a job of roping for somebody," Donneley said.

"Yes, an' I've had strings on some of them in my time," said Brownie, looking intently. "See that big rangy roan off to the left? That's ol' Sunfish Molly. She's been learnin' devilment for fifteen years, an' she's the hardest horse to corral an' one of the hardest to ride on this range. That ugly little iron-gray near her is Buckin' Ben. Them's mostly Lazy S horses. The boys are after 'em now, I'll bet, hazin' 'em down to the Skull Creek Ranch corrals. I'd like to see that Jack Morse try little Ben out. I've rode him too or three times,

an', believe me, he's more interestin' to watch than to ride."

After a moment, true to the prediction, four riders appeared at intervals above the crest of the ridge. The instant the first of them came in sight on the sky-line, the wild horses, with the big roan in the lead, whirled, and with manes and tails streaming, galloped away. They swung past the two men in a wide semicircle and disappeared behind a bend in the gulch below the spring.

There's Shorty Steelman. An' there's that girl agin," Brownie said, as the pursuers, holding directly down the valley came nearer, "still ridin' that brown horse! My God!" he exclaimed an instant later. "Look at that!"

The girl's horse, running swiftly, had suddenly doubled up as though his front feet had been jerked from under him by a taut rope, and had turned completely over head first, hurling his rider violently from the saddle.

The two men ran toward the scene of the accident, Donneley easily outdistancing his companion, who, between his bowed legs and high-heeled boots, was but an indifferent runner at the best. By the time they arrived panting on the scene, Steelman and Morse had picked the girl up. She was gasping for breath. Shorty shook her roughly.

"That's no way!" Donneley protested against the ungentle method of resuscitation. "She may be badly hurt."

But before he reached them the breath rushed back into her lungs and she gave a great sigh of relief.

"Are you hurt bad, Ruth?" Morse asked.

"No. Just—the—wind—knocked—out—of—me."

She smiled bravely. Then her eyes fell upon the horse who lay sprawling where he had fallen, several yards beyond the badger hole that had caused the accident. A fore leg broken just below the knee was twisted back under the body, and splintered bones protruded through the flesh.

With a cry of grief she ran to the animal and knelt beside it. Her shoulders shook with weeping.

"You fellers'd better drift," Brownie said to the other riders. "It'll take all of you and then some to coax ol' Molly and her bunch inside a fence. I'll bring Miss Paterson down to Skull Creek this afternoon."

There being nothing they could do, the men returned in pursuit of the range horses.

The girl was crying silently beside the wounded horse.

"Who's goin' to do it?" Brownie asked the engineer. "I hate to shoot a horse."

"Take the girl away," said Donneley, "and leave your gun at the camp. I'll put the poor brute out of his misery after she is out of hearing. Her friendship," he smiled grimly, "is probably worth more to you than to me. She will likely harbor a dislike for the man who uses a gun on her pet."

"I guess you're right at that," Brownie agreed. "Women is funny. But blamed if I'd call him a pet after what I seen him try to do to her yesterday."

He stepped up beside the girl.

"I think we'd better start," he ventured gently.

"Yes," she said. "I—I'm a ninny to cry this way."

"I know how it is," Brownie consoled. "It's tough to part with a horse you think a lot of."

"I suppose there's nothing we can do?"

"No. Even if we had him where we could swing him up, his leg is smashed too bad to be any good."

He unbuckled the cinch and drew the saddle away. The girl herself pulled off the bridle very gently, and ran her hand caressingly over the horse's head. Then she walked rapidly away. Brownie followed with the saddle.

The girl was silent while Brownie saddled the two horses. Her mood was depressing, though with her pretty, tear-stained face, she was a creature to stir the male in him to high endeavor for favor in her eyes.



THE young man did not analyze his emotions. He simply drew himself up and with a brief preface boasted of his homestead plans and spoke of the fortune that awaited him at the end of a short road as though all the obstacles between himself and that fortune were surmounted and his success an accomplished fact. His tall talk realized its primary object. The girl with a final sigh threw off her passivity, and changing like a jewel, turned in sunlight, flashed an enthusiasm to match his own.

Proudly he pointed out the general lay of his half-section. He called her attention

to the luxuriance of the sage-brush and described the easy access to water for irrigation.

She turned a bit of the virgin soil with the toe of her boot.

"It is really wonderful," she said. "I know this kind of land. It is as you say—it will easily raise five tons of alfalfa in two crops, with a third for beef pasture. And there is unlimited range." Her eyes wandered out over the wide expanse of rounded hills and ridges reaching back to the high mountains. "All it takes are a thousand dollars for fence materials, horses, machinery and alfalfa seed—and the nerve to stick it out."

The boy was more than a little taken aback by her clear-seeing analysis. The fact is, in the formation of his plans he had shirked facing the more forbidding details and the real costs. It is a revelation of an important phase of his character that he did so. He had no thousand dollars and no way to raise that sum except at the infinitely slow rate of forty-five a month.

He had steered clear of the question of money with a vague assurance that "it would come somehow."

But under the spell of her presence the knowledge of this lack did not tend to take away his confidence. Ruth Patterson was the type of woman for whom in the varying walks of life some men write poems and operas, others throw their youth and strength into the economic mill, and still others dream of swinging on the third strike for a home run in the ninth inning with the bases full.

Brownie was sorry when the trail ended at the Skull Creek Ranch.

IV



WHEN the moon was three nights older, Brownie, riding all his marketable assets, made the Lazy S Ranch. His three hundred and twenty was listed in the county recorder's books. His wages had gone to pay the filing fee and his second horse had been sold to pay the engineer. Five minutes after entering the gate he was unreasonably angry.

Shorty Steelman was the cause of it. That worthy was in the corral, currying out with a garden rake the mane and tail of a trembling bronco who was hitched to a snubbing post.

"Well, Brownie," he began, laying aside his implement at the call of a more interesting occupation, "I reckon you'll have a ranch to sell as soon as you git the lay of the land here. It's a good piece of ground you've got picked out, barrin' the need of a few thousand posts, a few miles of barb wire, a few thousand feet of lumber, a few miles of road, a few miles of ditch, a few months' work clearin' and breakin', and a few hundred pounds of alfalfa seed that cost eighteen cents a pound at the last quotation—barrin' them few little items, you've got a good starter of a ranch.

"But it ain't exactly a sociable place up there. Anyway a man wouldn't naturally figger on Winterin' up there with only the coyotes for company. A prime coyote makes a nice rug, but he sings a lonesome song, and don't noways take the place of a woman. Now that you've gone pokin' off an' let this feller Jack Morse beat your time, I reckon you'll be gettin' ready to sell out."

Brownie's animosity was not bought by the face value of Steelman's words. Personalities were commonly indulged in and were deemed no just ground for offense among friends. But the boy's resentment lay deeper. Without design, Shorty had used that knife-edged implication of his incapacity which had rankled in his breast since the night Luke Bowman had charged him with the task of proving his economic worth. "A few thousand posts—a few hundred pounds of alfalfa seed—" those things he did not have. Had he failed in forming his big plan, after all? Last, but far from being of minor importance, Shorty had asserted the success of a rival.

Raging inwardly, he made his way to the bunk-house. He drew a battered suitcase from under his bunk. He took therefrom his razor, a clean shirt and under-clothing, and a suit of store clothes that had set him back eighteen dollars and fifty cents. At the completion of his toilet he stuffed the trouser legs into a pair of new boots, tied a huge, blue silk handkerchief around his neck, took down a wide-brimmed Stetson from a nail, and went out.

While he was knocking the dust from the wool of his chaps against a fence, one of the boys came by. A grin overspread his face, and he opened his mouth to speak. Brownie looked up and glared at him.

"For God's sake, don't ever look at your

watch like that, Brownie," the man said, "or it will never run again."

"Yes," said Brownie, "an' if you'd happen to die, don't pull any of your jokes on Saint Peter. He'd accuse you of stealin' 'em from Grandpa Noah, and 'd send you down the trail for rustlin'."

The feeling which Brownie had as he rode to Bowman's ranch amounted to a premonition. He neared the place and saw two horsemen standing close together at the gate. He felt no sensation of surprise as he recognized a familiar girlish laugh. But his anger waxed hotter.

To the uninitiated it may seem a paradox that in the moment of Brownie's concentrated anger, he noted in detail the extraordinary saddle Morse was riding. It was of black engraved leather, and over it from the skirts to the tapaderas were great plates of silver gleaming dully in the moonlight. But in reality there was nothing strange in this attention.

Brownie was a rider. Riding was his profession. He noted a horse or a horse's trappings as naturally as an expert machinist takes note of an engine. It amounted to an instinct with him to find a blemish or to appreciate a flawless animal. His special training enabled him to do this without lessening his attention to the object in hand.

On reaching the couple, his horse laid back his ears as a threat to the nearest pony, then muzzled the girl familiarly.

A strained silence fell upon the group. The girl was the first to speak.

"Mr. Morse," she ventured infelicitously, "let me make you acquainted with Mr. Snyder."

"I've met Mr. Snyder," said Morse with an attempt at naturalness and ease, "but I'm willing to shake hands with a good man a second time."

Brownie extended his hand, but antagonism tingled from his fingers and blazed from his eyes.

Conversation died. The three stood in in awkward silence. Morse put in action the only efficient method of relieving the situation by taking his leave.

The two left alone watched him gallop away until he was no more than a dim blot in the moonlight. Brownie shifted in his saddle and cleared his throat. He found it hard to voice the indignant protests against her infidelity which had been

raging in his mind. The girl tapped a post abstractedly with her whip. When she looked up, her eyes challenged him.

"Was there something you wanted to say to me, Brownie?" she asked. There was a cutting invitation and a defiance in her voice.

"There don't seem to be anything to say," he began bitterly. "Either you or me—I don't know which—has made an awful fool of me. I go out an' file on the best piece of Gover'ment land in Willowa County to show you an' your father an' the world I can find a way to make money faster than forty-five a month, and I come back to have the first feller I meet sympathizin' with me because I have to live alone on my homestead. In fact, everybody seems to know more about my business—an' troubles—than I do!"

"Is that all you have to say?" she asked coldly.

"Yes."

"Now listen, Brownie," she said deliberately. "I didn't send you out to file on a homestead. The fact is, I'm not going to agree to live on a homestead a thousand miles from nowhere with anybody, where there's nothing but coyotes and range cattle for company—and none of the cattle my own. It is too far from civilization even here. If I make a change, I want it to be somewhere where something happens once in a while more interesting than a sheep-herder getting bit by a rattle-snake."

"That's enough," he interrupted. "I see I've been wrong all along. I missed it by not goin' to high school when you did. Maybe I could of been a clerk in a sody fountain by this time savin' up money to buy a Wild West show."

He regretted his words almost before they had passed his lips.

The girl's eyes blazed.

"You're hitting at Jack Morse, of course. The fact is, he knows enough that he don't have to punch cattle——"

"Do you want me to unsaddle your horse for you?" The tension and coldness in his voice checked her as no sharpness of repartee could have done.

"No," she said shortly, "nor anything else."

"Good enough," he said, "but just one word more. I'm sorry I come here tonight. I ought to of knowed better. It

ain't the part of a man to wrangle like a kid. So we'll call this good-by."



HIS last words belied the state of his feelings. In truth, he was seething with anger. He felt that he had been shamed in the eyes of all his acquaintances, and his acquaintance extended over a wide scope of the thinly settled country. His filing on the homestead on the eve of his rebuff made him the butt of a joke of exceeding richness.

It was his certainty of this that made him resolve forthwith to leave the place—but not before he had exacted satisfaction from the man who, whether in innocence or through design, had placed him in the position. Jealousy played but a small part in his thoughts and plans. He had found that the girl with whom he had thought himself in love didn't exist. He had taken up a homestead for a wraith of his imaginings. And well he knew that neither a wraith nor a girl who yearned for urban ease and luxuries had a place in the building of a home on a piece of raw land in a solitude of bunch-grass and sagebrush.

But his anger was directed against no mere ghost. Jack Morse, with his sophisticated manners and his silver saddle, was real enough. Brownie choked as he thought of him calmly cutting him out with his girl and making him a target for Shorty Steelman's crude barbed wit.

Brownie opened the door of the bunkhouse at the Lazy S. Two of the boys were playing seven-up with a greasy deck of cards. Two were lying on their bunks smoking and talking. Shorty was reading a dog-eared copy of one of Mrs. Southworth's novels.

"How now, Brownie," he greeted the boy. "Back so soon! That looks bad. But I'll tell you, boy, if you'll just peeruse this little volume of literchure, you'll find——"

"That's enough, Shorty!" Brownie exploded savagely. "Keep that up an' I'll kick all the ribs loose from your backbone. I don't care if you are as tall as a house!"

The good-natured Shorty opened his eyes and mouth in stupefaction. The players dropped their cards. The idlers on the bunks sat up. There was no mistaking the earnestness of the boy.

He went directly to his bunk and fumbled under the pillow. As he turned back he tried vainly to conceal a belted revolver. Without a word he went out. Shorty sprang to his feet and followed him.

"Here! Here!" He remonstrated. "You're not goin' out gunnin' for somebody!"

"You git to — outa here an' leave me alone!" was his friend's answer.

Shorty followed him to the gate expostulating. There, Brownie untied his horse, sprang into the saddle, and galloped away. Steelman ran to the stable for another horse.

When Snyder reined in his panting horse in front of the show troupe's camp, he met Ruth Patterson, who had just ridden up from the opposite direction. Her smile of greeting vanished at sight of his face.

"Where can I find Morse?" he asked.

Her clear eyes searched his, seeming to read his thoughts. She glanced down to where the revolver hung at his hip.

"And with a gun!" she said.

He found his anger passing under the spell of her eyes.

"Can you—" he began again.

"No!" she said sharply. "What do you want to fight him for?"

"I never said anything about fightin'," he said sullenly.

"But I know."

"Then maybe you know what a— a fool he's made of me in these parts. Every guy I meet is askin' me when I'm goin' to move on my homestead an' givin' me the addresses of 'Heart an' Hand' papers!"

"And just because a foolish girl has her head turned by a silver-mounted saddle—or maybe by a highschool course—you want to kill somebody and give the sheriff the job of breaking your neck at the county jail. Really, Mr. Snyder, I'm ashamed—well, I thought better of you."

"It ain't because I'm crazy about no girl," he argued in self-defense. "In fact, after what she said tonight, I wouldn't give a rap for a whole harem like her. But there ain't no livin' in this place now."

She recognized her victory in his return to reason.

"If you want to know what I know about the case, I can tell you a lot more. In the first place, your saying you can't live here is silly. In the second place the best advice I can give you is not to throw

up your homestead. I'll tell you why—"

That was an unfortunate allusion in his present mood. Mention of the homestead called up a bitter train of thought. And to add to his returning resentment, Shorty Steelman at that moment arrived.

The girl left them alone.

"Remember what I have said," she told Brownie at parting. "I'll tell you the rest some time—at Pendleton, perhaps. Yes, I'll see you when you go to the round-up."

"I didn't mean to butt in this way," apologized the insufferable Shorty. "Here I come poundin' up bareback to stop a gunfight, an' don't break up nothin' but a spoonin' match. But you had me fooled. I never knew a feller to come in like a mad long-horn lookin' for a cannon when he was goin' out sparkin'."

Brownie met his friend's sally with an unresponsive face.

"I'm goin' toward Enterprise," he said. "Are you?"

He turned his horse and rode away.

Shorty overtook him.

"Look here, Brownie," he remonstrated, serious for once; "this ain't no way to treat a man. If I've hurt your feelin's, I apologize. I didn't mean for you to git your back up at what I said. You've knowed me long enough to know that."

"That's all right," said the boy, softening a little. "I ain't exactly sore at you. I've had enough of it, that's all."

He urged his horse into a gallop, leaving his friend standing dumfounded in the road.

V



HE RODE a tired horse through two days. He rode out of the familiar country, crossed Snake River, and came to where James T. Bartley's ranches lay in long shoe-strings along the narrows of Salmon River Valley, to where Jim Hartley's cattle ranged over a hundred thousand acres of unfenced land, and where Jim Bartley's cowpunchers wrangled and fought with the sheepherders. He struck the bow-legged little foreman of the Lower Ranch, Sid Taylor, for a job; and he got it, because a man who can rope and tie a steer, handle a marking-knife, conquer a horse, and read a brand from a distance is as valuable in some parts of the world as a man who

knows his way among the intricate parts of a super-heater is in others.

The boys accepted the newcomer on trial, as it were, and began with many obvious, circumlocutory devices to arrange a meeting between him and the pet outlaw of the ranch, a female mustang of Montana breed, called the Flying Widow. The meeting came about on schedule. "Spike" Ellis, inordinately proud of his position, led the she-devil into the corral with her snubbing halter on the horn of his most prized possession, one of Marden's, a Pendleton saddlemaker's, Improved Williamsburgs.

It was really a good saddle, but extreme in its design, being abnormally wide in the fork, and with two rolls, built into the tree, which fitted over the rider's legs. Spike had brought it back from Pendleton with him after attending the round-up the previous Fall.

The mare received Brownie's saddle quietly, while the young man sat on the fence and looked on.

"She don't act bad," he opined, his pretense of innocence carrying out the ancient rôle in such affairs.

"No, she ain't. She's gentle as a kitten," said Spike, with a broad wink at one of the others.

"She's all ready," said one of the attendants.

Brownie slipped down from the fence, an unlighted cigaret held lightly between his fingers.

"You're sure she's gentle?" he insisted. "I don't want to take no chances on gettin' hurt."

He mounted.

"All right," he said.

Grinning broadly, Spike slipped off the blinder and snubbing halter. And with deep-throated bawls of anger, the Flying Widow went to tearing up the soil of the corral with her naked hoofs.

After making sure that she was going to stay on her feet, Brownie carelessly lighted his cigaret. When he dismounted a few moments later, his reputation was made.

Said Spike, after they had unsaddled and turned loose the vanquished Flying Widow—

"I don't often try to tell strangers their business, but I want to say to you that if you had a real saddle like this one—he

indicated his Improved Williamsburg—"instead of that ol' hull of yourn, I'd bet a month's wages there ain't a guy that'll ride at Pendleton which can hook you in the buckin' contest."

"You say I'm a passable buster," Brownie giped, "an' yet you want me to git a cage that ol' hell, himself, couldn't buck me out of. What do you think a man wants them bumpers for? Better just git a rawhide rope an' let somebody tie you to the rig an' be done with it."

A general laugh was raised at Spike's expense, for Brownie was fast gaining in favor with the gang.

"You're partly right, pardner," said Sid Taylor, "but ag'in you're wrong if you say nothin' can git bucked out of that thing of Spike's. If an ornery little Appaloose didn't spill him out of it all over the Sheep Crick Meadows, then I'll pay for lyin'!"

"Yes," said Wallie Martin, "and, by gum, he's looked sheepish every time anybody's spoke of it since."

IT SEEMS likely that when the live men of Pendleton first dreamed of paraphrasing "Cheyenne's Frontier Days" with a Wild West spectacle that would put their town on the map, they were actuated by mercenary motives. The advertisement of the town was, doubtless, nearer their hearts than the mere gratification of staging a show to thrill the primordial instincts of the spectators. But whatever their real object was, their effort was an unqualified success.

They had spared no pains or expense to make it unique, and to make it full enough of thrills to glut the craving of the most rabid seeker of vicarious adventure. The wildest and toughest, the most unconquerable and finished buckers were procured; likewise the wildest, fleetest, and longest horned steers. There were bucking burros and unrideable bulls. There were wild-horse races, cowboy races, cow-girl races, squaw races, and stage-coach races. There were bulldogging contests and steer-roping contests. And there were war-dances and medicine-dances staged by full-blooded Umatillas in their ancestral paint and feathers.

It was a grand show of its kind. People to the number of five times the town's population came from near and far, crowded the hotels, and filled long trains of sleepers.

in the O. W. R. & N. yards. A white tent-city sprang up overnight before the show and vanished away like a mist patch under the sun when the carnival was ended.

Because it was the best and cheapest advertisement in the world, the saddle-makers of the town vied with each other for the honor of giving the grand prize of the Carnival to the winner of the bucking contest. It was a splendid silver saddle, heavy with the precious metal, with embellished skirts and long tapaderas.

It was worth a year's wages to the winner, enriching him with a load of honor and a gaudy trinket, too good to use, but fine for show; and it brought to the books of the company who made it, and whose name was widely heralded as the giver, countless orders—not for saddles embellished with silver, but for saddles of steel and rawhide and leather, for use.

Marden's Williamsburg, Marden's Improved Williamsburg, and Marden's Unbreakable Chain Rig Saddles sprang into evidence over the ranges and cattle countries of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and western Montana as thickly as alfalfa after a planting.

It was, no doubt, the mere spectacle, and no consciousness of any ulterior motives in their entertainers that won the good will of simple-minded fellows like Spike Ellis. He had no suspicion of having been influenced by an advertising ruse when he bought one of Marden's Improved Williamsburg saddles.

On the Salmon River ranges the coming event was discussed with interest and enthusiasm. Local saloons and gambling houses were falling off sadly in their receipts while the boys jealously hoarded their wages for the big celebration in the Fall.

It was one day in July at the noonday meal that a typical discussion was started. Sid Taylor announced that he was going to Alkali in the ranch car.

"Is there anything you boys want to send after?" he asked.

Wallie Martin tossed two dollars on the table.

"Bring me some tobacco and wheat straws," he said. "An' by —, that's goin't to last me till I start for Pendleton. If some of you bums that's layin' up all your pennies don't buy some smokin' for yourselves, you might as well figger on

quittin'. I'm goin' to empty my gat at the first miser that hits me for the makin's."

"If that's the case," said Brownie, grinning, "you can bring me a couple of bucks' worth, too."

Two or three days later, Bartley, the owner of the ranch, ate dinner with the boys, and during the course of the meal put the final peg in the Pendleton enthusiasm. The rancher was rankling from a new offense by an ancient rival of the range. He arose from his chair the better to lend weight to his words as he made his Napoleonic speech.

"Noble Maddern is takin' his string of relay horses to Pendleton to grab off the prize. He has, also, entered two of his best riders in the buckin' contest. He has put this proposition to his men: on condition his team wins the relay and one of his men wins the saddle, he will split the whole purse even up between his relay rider and the winner of the bronco-bustin' contest. Well, I'll go Maddern one better. I'll give a thousand-dollar check to the one of you who sticks in the game longer than his best rider, no matter if you never git half-way to the semi-finals. I'll show him who advertises Salmon River!"

"Three cheers for Jim T.!" yelled Sid Taylor rising from his chair. "One—two—hip—hip—hooray!"

The dishes rattled on the table. Charlie, the Chinese cook, thrust his queued head through the door and grinned a slant-eyed, Oriental grin.

"Alle time loun-up," he muttered, and shuffled back to the red-hot kitchen stove.

VI



SO THE boys from IXL, along with twenty-five thousand others from divers parts of the United States, went to Pendleton.

Two hours after hitting town, on a corner of the crowded main street, Brownie met Ruth Patterson. She had discarded her cowgirl attire for a chic little suit, modish hat, gloves and shoes, which made her seem urban and unapproachable. Her recognition of him was instant.

"Hello, Brownie Snyder," she greeted him. "So you came to Pendleton after all. I'm glad."

"Ain't you ridin' in the show?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. But only in the daytime.

"You aren't afraid of these boiled clothes?" she laughed.

Brownie looked down ruefully at his corduroys and cowboy boots, and resolved forthwith to buy a presentable suit as soon as the stores were open in the morning.

"No," he said, "but I'd like to ask you to go to a show or some place, an' now I ain't got the nerve."

"There's a movie right across the street," she said. "But if you'd rather, I can go home and don my riding skirt."

They were making their way across the street.

"I have been waiting for you to ask me about the important message for you," she told him. And then at his vacant look, "I do believe you've forgotten!"

"It ain't too late to ask you now, is it?"

"But I won't tell you until after you have won the riding contest. That will be your punishment for taking me so lightly. When you win, I'll tell you."

"Ain't Jack Morse goin' to ride?" he asked surprised. "I thought you'd be pullin' for him."

"Why? Because he is a member of our show? I detest that man! He is my partner in the trick riding, and that's all. He is a good rider. He also has a knack at recognizing a good business proposition. But that's about all the good I can see in him. He's as selfish and cold-blooded as a rainbow trout. If it will do you any good, every time you mount a horse, you may know I'm 'pullin' for you.'"

He looked into her eyes.

"If that's the case," he said seriously, "I'll bring home the bacon—and the saddle."

They entered the little theater and saw a love story enacted on the screen. A white yacht figured in it, and a stretch of rocky beach in a driving storm. There was a girl in the picture who only made him more aware of the girl at his side. To the boy, who had spent a short, hard life among grim realities, the picture had a world of appeal not felt by the average blasé theater-goer.

He was in a melting mood when he left the girl in front of her hotel. He went away walking on air, her last words in his ears: "Remember, I'm banking on you and 'pullin' for you.'"

Two of the three days of the round-up had been run and bucked away. Because

the old adage holds true in regard to the Pendleton carnival as in the final drastic culling of the goats from the sheep, where many were called, few, indeed, were chosen. The names of one hundred and fifty cowboys, ambitious for the glory and the prize, had lain inconspicuous in small type on a page of the program, their very number making them all equally inconsequential. The fun-mad crowd had no intention of memorizing one hundred and fifty meaningless names. It was easier to learn the one after the hundred and forty-nine were eliminated and pushed back into the obscurity from which they were seeking to emerge.

Two of the three days were passed. Many horses had bucked under the critical eyes of judges; for the horses themselves, quite as well as the men, were, unknowing and uncaring, trying for the honor of the finals. Many men had mounted. Some had been ingloriously rolled in the dust of the arena. Others had ridden their beasts, but had not been called for the second try-out. From each contest came a constantly thinning group.

When the battle opened on the third day, the eight men who had survived were superb riders without exception. Only remained the last and greatest elimination contest, the semi-finals. From the eight were to be chosen the three who were to make the final ride for the saddle.

Now, paradoxical as it may seem, each rider prayed for a hard and showy buck. Several from among the hundreds of horses used had bucked their way into the eyes and hearts of the crowd. A picked few, among them—in fulfillment of Mark White's old prophecy—Bucking Ben, had, each, several complete victories to his credit.

Ben had vanquished three riders the first day; and the crowd had come to know him and to welcome his appearance. So creditable had been those performances that the judges had given instructions that he be favored on the second day, and his strength conserved for the finals.

These horses were hard to ride; but each man well knew that merely to sit a horse with a shining reputation was several points in his favor. A poor horse, while easily ridden, was a handicap. Others besides potential champions can ride a slow buck, and some can do it very well,

while none but a horseman of the first water can survive the brain-addling plunging and twisting of a horse such as Speed Ball or Bucking Ben.

Brownie sat a gentle horse on that side of the arena where were the gates to the stables and corrals, watching the horses led in and out. He saw Jack Morse make a pretty exhibition on a stiff-jumping animal and receive a tremendous ovation from the spectators. He rightly suspected that the mere fact of Morse's name having come down from the previous year was a factor in the inspiration of the crowd's enthusiasm, but had in justice to admit that the ride warranted a place among the winners.

The appearance of the next rider recalled to him Bartley's offer. This man was a wizened little Mexican in a garb of eye-paining brilliancy, who, as Brownie had noted during the past two days, stuck to his saddle with the facility of a horse-fly. This little sun-dried bit of humanity was Maddern's rider, and though the rancher's aspirations in the relay were fast being blighted, the Mexican apparently bade fair to be rewarded for his efforts with a silver saddle.

Ruth Patterson rode up beside Brownie, shattering his interest in his opponent.

"You've carried off the honors thus far, Brownie," she said, "and with a thousand dollars hanging on the decision, you can't afford to fall down now."

"How'd you find that out!" he exclaimed. "You've got any of them detectives I ever read about beat a country mile for knowin' everything."

"Yes," she laughed, "I'm a *Sherlock Holmes*—with the story of Mr. Bartley's offer in two of yesterday's Portland papers. I'll bet you didn't even know that Maddern, not to be outdone, has put up a thousand for his rider, too."

Then his name was called.

"Now is your turn," the girl said with a sudden reversion to seriousness. "Go in and win. Remember, I'm pullin' for you all the time."

He had drawn a high-jumping, crooked buck, and under the goad of competition, and moved by the inspiration of the girl's interest, he rode so gracefully and well that he was given a place among the three. As fate had it, Jack Morse and Maddern's Mexican were the other two.



RESTLESS and plainly nervous, the boy had found his old place by the gate while Morse made his tell-tale attempt. As usual he had his saddle-horse under him. In the rising excitement he felt lost unless he could tense his legs on his scarred old saddle and feel a horse's side heaving beneath him.

Shorty Steelman, followed by two of the IXL boys, rode up to him.

Spike Ellis crowded his horse close beside Brownie's and drew a long black bottle from his pocket.

"Here, Brownie," he said, "take a pull at this. It'll steady you down. You've got to grab 'em this time."

"Git out of here with that squirrel poison," Sid Taylor growled. "Did somebody buy you off to dope him?"

"You know better'n that," Spike protested. "I just thought a few jolts would steady him down."

"Steady him up, you mean. A couple of pulls at that bottle, and he couldn't hit the ground with his hat!"

"Booze never helped nobody ride," Shorty substantiated. "We'll take on our share of that tonight, after the kid has copped the silver-mounted rig."

"All right. Jus'shu say," agreed Spike. "But a few jolts always helps me."

"If that's the case," said Sid with infinite sarcasm, "let me give you a piece of advice: if a few jolts makes you ride as good as you do, the next time you git ready to crawl a bronc, you want to drink about four quarts."

The gate swung open and through it was led the outlaw on whom Brownie's hope rested.

"By God!" Shorty exclaimed. "You've drawn little Ben!"

The notorious Bucking Ben was not a striking-looking horse. To a casual observer he was merely a shaggy, vicious little cayuse. His color was a dirty gray, with a black mane and tail. His mane was long and ragged, half hanging to one side and half to the other. The front of his head bulged out between his eyes; and the eyes themselves were small and peculiarly evil. His body was short, his legs stocky and muscular, and his heavy shoulders advertised the reserve muscular power which enabled him to dip and twist and throw in that corkscrew motion of body when bucking which but few riders

could calculate on and anticipate accurately.

The huge crowd cheered when he was led into the arena. If Ben could have understood the language of humans, he would have been gratified at the reception. The enthusiasm of the spectators must have vied with the welcome extended to a conquering gladiator of ancient time when he showed his bronze-sheathed body on the white sands.

As for Brownie, he had felt a surge of joy at sight of the familiar little beast. The horse against whose strength he was so soon to pit his own strength and skill was not an enemy, but a friend. They had come off the same strip of range. They were old acquaintances meeting in a strange country.

Ben, after the manner of real wise outlaws, who do not waste their energies in bootless combat before the coming of the rider, was standing quietly enough, blindfolded, his nose held within two inches of Shorty Steelman's saddle horn.

The megaphones stationed before the tiers of seats announced the names of rider and horse.

Brownie stepped up beside Steelman and whispered:

"When you let him go Shorty, pull everything off his head. Pull off every string. I want the judges and the crowd to be satisfied that he's got his head."

"That's takin' an awful chance," his friend protested.

"I've got to show 'em all I've got," Brownie spoke with finality. "If you don't, I will after he starts, or git bucked off tryin'."

With seeming quiet and deliberation, but inwardly quivering with the excitement, he tightened his chaps belt, from force of habit, tried each of his spurs, and then, without hesitation, stepped in beside the snubbing horse and swung into the saddle.

"Are you ready, kid?" asked Shorty.

"Turn him loose," said Brownie, lifting off his sombrero and holding it in readiness.

Steelman leaned out and carefully unbuckled the throat latch. Then he grasped the ropes and straps crossing the horse's head and jerked them all away, at the same time reining back his own horse.

From the throats of thirty thousand people came the roar:

"Let 'er buck! Scratch 'im cowboy!"

Brownie flapped his wide hat across the animal's ears and struck with his spurs.

Changed instantly from the shape of a horse to an arch-backed, headless, plunging demon, the animal leaped out long and powerfully across the arena. Then with incredible quickness and abruptness he swapped ends and came back, dipping his mighty shoulders to alternate sides with vicious, snapping jerks, twisting his supple body like a great animated corkscrew, momentarily changing his tactics, breaking his stride, throwing in back-hitches, trying every devilish trick he had ever learned.

Ten seconds later the whole vast crowd was on its feet. On that field where it had seen enacted so many thrilling feats, this rider was doing an astounding thing. The gray horse was "sunfishing." That is, at the culmination of each leap he was planting his front feet at an angle, with his hind legs braced to support the effort, and was twisting his shoulders to alternate sides.

The bucking itself wasn't unique—only, Ben did it unusually well—but the rider was taking the crowd's breath. With each swift leap, swaying lightly in the saddle as the horse swept his shoulders toward the earth, he was reaching down, first to the right then to the left, scooping up handfuls of dust and scattering it in the air; and, disdaining the clinging aid of his spurs, he was scratching with both feet.

When Shorty Steelman galloped up beside the outlaw after the peak of the effort was passed, allowing Brownie to scramble up behind his own saddle, the decision of the judges was not needed to announce the name of the victor. The voice of the spectators has ever been a dictatorial power. It was stronger than the will of the emperor at the ancient gladiatorial combats. It was strong enough, had it been needed, to influence the judges on this occasion.

Jack Morse had made a good ride, a graceful, conservative, cautious ride; Brownie, a brilliant ride, the recklessness and, withal, the faultlessness of which was soul-satisfying to the most hypercritical of judges. Noble Maddern's Mexican was only a greaser, after all, whose cowboy wages enabled him to buy his soul's delights in the way of Pike's Peak sombreros and rainbow sashes. But the round-up is democratic; and a barbarous taste in

color combinations did not blind the judges to his worthiness for the second prize, which was a pair of chaps, given by one of Marden's rivals in saddlery, which matched the Mexican's sombrero for ostentation.

VII



ACCORDING to the decree of the round-up judges, Brownie Snyder was the Champion Bronco-Buster of the World, a high-sounding enough title even if it was contestable by the winners in the Los Angeles Rodeo, the Cheyenne Pioneer Days, and every other notable contest of like nature in the West. He had entered into competition with more than a hundred picked riders and had come off victorious. His name and picture were in many papers, reporters were seeking interviews, and the manager of a circus had offered him a limited time engagement at two hundred a week to travel with the show and make exhibition rides. Brownie had tacitly accepted, and the contract was to be signed on the following day.

He would have signed it immediately, only he was too busy. That night was to witness the grand celebration. Pendleton was to receive such a shaking up that it wouldn't sleep again or be dull for a year. The town needed a coat of red paint. There were not less than five hundred cowboys who felt like great painters. Brownie, being the lion of the day, was naturally counted on as a director.

Before he left the grounds, he was set upon by Shorty Steelman and several of the IXL punchers, all of whom had bundles under their arms. They carried him into an empty stall in a stable and literally tore his drab flannel shirt from his body. They stripped him to the skin; and then out of those bundles came cowboy clothes that would have made Solomon in all his glory green with envy. There were silk underclothing, a silk shirt bluer than the sky, two square yards of silk handkerchief redder than the red of a rainbow, a sombrero wide of brim and high of crown, with a broad band spangled with silver stars, and a pair of riding-boots of dainty leather embossed with flower designs.

When the cavalcade rode up the main street under the lights, no introduction was needed to announce the identity of the

central figure. The crowd in the street knew, and—because it was all in the game, because it was just for one live night in the little city—roared out its sanction. It was not only the mob that cheered. Big eight and twelve cylinder motor-cars stopped, and well-dressed, substantial-looking men raised their hats, and fashionably gowned ladies clapped their hands and waved white handkerchiefs.

It was all in the game. For the time being, Pendleton was the round-up city and all the citizens and guests were round-up people, and the winner of the grand prize of the round-up was the most popular man in the world.

Brownie Snyder was the Champion Bronco-Buster of the World by the decree of infallible judges.

Directly opposite the wide-open doors of the Queen City Saloon, Shorty Steelman threw up his hand in an imperious gesture and reined in his horse. His cohorts instantly stopped. Shorty whirled his horse to the left; his companions followed with the precision of a little troop of cavalry; and three abreast, with Shorty and Sid Taylor flanking the champion, they headed straight for the hospitable doors of the Queen City.

Redoubled cheering burst from the multitude. Over the curb went Shorty, using spurs and quirt freely on his reluctant horse, and through the door, his followers pouring after him. The yelling throng swelled in behind them.

"What have you done with all your likker!" cried Shorty, pushing his horse up to the bar. He jerked out a roll of bills. "We ain't camels!"

A smiling bartender pushed back the proffered money.

"This one's on the house. First, what will the champion have?"

"Shorty's my manager," said Brownie. "I'll have to leave it to him."

"When in doubt take whisky, and take it straight," Shorty said. "We can't break away from our ol' fare."

"Tex" Marne, the proprietor, stepped behind the bar.

"I seldom presume to dictate to my guests," he said, "but if you gentlemen will allow me, I've a particularly good case of champagne, perhaps, you'd like to try. Then if you insist, you can have Bourbon for a chaser."

"Hear! Hear!" from the mob.

Out came a number of bottles bearing French labels, and corks popped. The sparkling glasses were passed to the mounted men. The ancient toasts were given, "Here's luck," "Here's a go." The glasses were drained.

The wine leaped in Brownie's veins. He drew from his pocket his wallet and extracted from it a slip of paper, folded into a minute square. That slip of paper represented a thousand dollars which had lain in a bank to James T. Bartley's credit.

"Guess we'd better have another one," he was beginning, when a tremendous shouting arose at the door.

All faces turned in that direction, and with consternation Brownie saw pushing through the crowd the familiar head of Ruth Patterson's horse, and serenely atop of him sat the girl, herself.

Instinctively, Brownie raised his hat. Instantly, every man in sight uncovered. And suddenly, miraculously the big, closely packed room was still, except for the restless stamping of horses. With a strange smile on her face, the girl edged her horse close to Brownie's. She looked hard into his eyes.

"Come with me," she said in a low voice. "It is time to tell you."

She turned her horse and rode out.

Brownie followed, the crowd parting before them. On reaching the street the girl, without a backward glance, urged her pony into a gallop. The boy's horse quickened his pace and sprang up beside her. They quickly left behind them the business-center of the little town. Puzzled a little, but caring not at all, Brownie followed her lead until the clamor of the crowds was dim behind them, and they were alone in an empty and dimly-lighted thoroughfare. She stopped abruptly and faced him.

"Your time is up on your homestead in four days," she began without preface. "At that time Jack Morse will jump it, as he has intended to do since he learned of your delay in occupying it. Are you going to throw up a ranch that will be worth ten thousand in two or three years, and twenty thousand in five or six years, and which is your chance to make good, for a howling mob that will forget you in the morning, and for a few drinks of bad whisky that

will make you glad you are forgotten when you wake up?"

Brownie was dumfounded.

"Homestead?" he said.

"Have you forgotten the day you showed it to me?"

"No. I ain't."

With her words had come a vision of the circular little valley, covered with luxuriant sage-brush proclaiming the richness of the soil; and the lonesome ranges of hills reaching back to the blue, timbered mountains in the distance.

"No," he said. "I remember that, all right."

"Well," she exclaimed impatiently, stamping her tiny boot in her stirrup, "what are you going to do about it?"

"I don't have to homestead, now," he said doggedly. "I'll tell the world that. I've got another system for making money, too. I'm startin' out with a show to-morrow."



"LISTEN," she said, urging her horse close to him. "You've got no system for making money at all. You are just finding a way to spend money and spoil yourself. There you were, when I rode in, getting ready to break the check Mr. Bartley gave you. By morning you would have had nothing but a big head."

"This job you're taking up isn't what it's cracked up to be. Those circus bad horses are not horses at all. They are just poor brutes that are tortured into bucking every day whether they want to or not. You'd be sick of your job in two weeks."

"You seem to think," he begun rebelliously, "that I'm just a kid, that I don't know what I'm doin'."

"No," she laughed a little and laid her hand lightly on his arm. "I don't think you're a kid. You know some things, all right. You know ranching, and you know cattle, and you know how to be square. But you haven't had the experience to travel with con men and circus wise guys."

In her eagerness her hand was still pressing his arm. Brownie was aware only of that thrilling touch.

"You've just got time enough to get to Enterprise, buy a wagon and team, and get a tent on your ground before the three months are gone."

"You've had your day, and it's been a good one. Just now you are the big man

of the town. But go out with a Cheap-John show, exhibit yourself at two bits a head, and see how long it lasts! There's nothing as sorry as a stale champion."

"Say," he protested feebly, "you surely don't think I could go out there and live all alone while I proved up."

She withdrew her hand.

"Well," she said, her eyes on the ground, "it shouldn't be so hard for the Champion Bronco-Buster of the World to find a—partner."

Brownie reined his horse quickly to her side.

"Do—do you mean—" he stammered.

"Will *you* go with me?"

He slipped his free arm around her.

She held him away with both hands.

"You made me ask you," she chided.

He dropped both reins and drew her close. The horses, restless beneath them, edged farther and farther apart. The distant arc light, casting a dim radiance between the two horses, made but one shadow of them on the empty street. The riders swayed farther and farther from their saddles, until the space between them was too wide to bridge. As they parted, Brownie laughed deep in his throat.

"Sure, I'll beat Jack Morse to that home-stead," he said, reining his horse toward her. "An' if Jim T.'s thousand ain't enough, I'll sell this silver rig and buy a few hundred posts, some barbed wire, an' alfalfa seed."

"Frightfulness" as Practised by the Savages

By THOMAS S. MILLER

FRIGHTFULNESS" seems to have taken civilization by surprise, whereas it is as old as warfare itself. Among the African tribes the art of breaking the morale of the enemy by inspiring fear is highly developed; it is the explanation of war-paint and hideous head-dresses, yells, and ferocious war-dances in front of the enemy. Often opposing forces will line up within shouting distance of each other and for days hurl taunts, filthy insults, threats to "come and eat you up," and will parade their fleshpots to back up the boast, whilst their Goliaths swagger up and down before the ranks, the minstrels of the tribe singing of their mighty deeds and invulnerability.

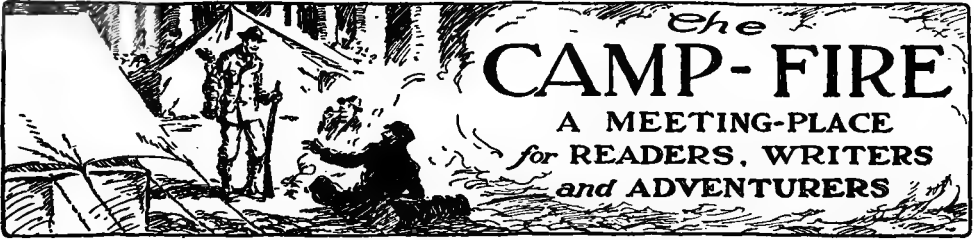
These warriors take to themselves such terrifying names as the British give to their superdreadnoughts—the Thunderer, Terrible, Invincible. They execute ferocious charges at an imaginary enemy and whirl and shriek and brandish asságaïs. This play may go on for days, like two boys trying to scare each other—"I kin lick you." "No you can't neither." "You just hit me and see." "You hit me first and you will see." "I kin lick you with one hand tied

behind my back." "You try it, that's all; you just try it, that's all."

Each masks his timidity under a brave show of clenched fists and tongue talk, whilst nervously watching the other to see if he has him bluffed. Often the blacks will engage in this wordy warfare for days, only to rise and go peacefully home to celebrate a wedding or reap the ripe grain. If they do come to battle and one of their Goliaths falls they are as careful to keep the news from the enemy as the Germans are said to be hiding the death of Hindenburg.

The shocking tortures practised by the American Indians on their captives were deliberately calculated to inspire terror in the hearts of the settlers and scare them back to their own country. In England's many little African wars rockets are used to inspire terror. The blacks call them "war medicine" and "*juju* fire." As the animals practise "frightfulness" with intimidating growls and roars, so do the savages shriek war-cries, groan through dry gourds, beat tom-toms.

Noise, boast, fake-courage and wanton cruelty are the concomitants of "frightfulness."



SO MANY of you have sent in more "dope" on guns since our Camp-Fire article "Firearms, Old and New," that at our next meeting we'll have an interesting bunch of them all at one sitting. Meanwhile here are a bit of gun information and a gun question from our comrade E. L. Cunningham, Chief Yeoman, U. S. N.

El Paso, Texas.

Being something of a gun crank myself, I studied this list rather carefully, and wish to call your attention to an omission noted. No mention is made, in the guns of from 1850 to 1860, of the Colt revolving carbine. This gun was manufactured somewhere between 1850 and 1865 for use of the cavalry and chambered for either the .45-70 or .45-90 cartridge. The breech action was the same as that of the frontier model Colt revolver, namely, a large cylinder. One of these guns is, or was in 1912, in the collection of ancient and modern firearms of Captain M. B. Lloyd, deceased, displayed in the Carnegie Public Library at Ft. Worth, Texas. This gun, I have been informed, played a fairly important part in the cavalry engagements of the Union army but was shortly replaced by the first Springfield repeating rifles.

I WISH to ask if the revolver listed among those manufactured by Colt as the "new service" is the same as the revolver patented in 1871, 1872 and 1875 and known (in Texas at least) as the "frontier" model? This revolver is made in the .32-20, .38, .44 and .45 calibers. It is sold under the name of "frontier model" in the shops with which I have had acquaintance in Texas. If you could print a discussion of these points I have made in Camp-Fire it would be greatly appreciated. I am sure that either Mr. Brown or Mr. Wiggin, whose lists were very complete indeed, could clear up these points with ease, and this letter is intended in no way as a criticism of either gentleman.—E. L. CUNNINGHAM.

ANOTHER old English comrade of our writers' brigade reports himself safe and sound and on the job:

Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

I am —ishly busy in a climate like —, getting out a weekly in English, Hebrew and Arabic. But nobody cares a — about us with the present fighting going on in France. Your men, as I knew they would, have done splendidly and are going to do better still.—ALBERT KINROSS.

HERE is a letter from one of us, a physician, whose letter seems to bear out the claims of the much-discussed scout and Indian fighter, Captain Drannan. Some of you were asking for any evidence that would substantiate the record Drannan claimed for himself. All we are seeking is the facts, though naturally we'd prefer to see it established that this old man had merely told the truth about himself.

Atlanta, Ga.

As an old reader of *Adventure* I am interested in Mr. E. A. Brininstool's letter concerning Capt W. F. Drannan, in order to help establish Captain Drannan's claims as an Indian scout or rather Indian killer as he was known among old Western men. Place all this only as a bit of second-hand information.

I MET Captain Drannan years ago at a hotel in Seattle, Wash., was with him for several days, and he told me some of his Indian experiences that I have since read in his book, "Thirty Years on the Plains," which book I believe a correct story of Captain Drannan's actual exploits.

He was an old man twenty-five years ago when I met him, rather lame in one leg from an Indian arrow having cut a tendon. Captain Jack Crawford, the well-known scout, has often told me in my office in Atlanta (Jack was my patient and friend) of Drannan's exploits and while he admired him as one of the very best of the old-time scouts of the Kit Carson school (of whom he was foster son), he usually made it plain that Drannan hated Indians and would take any and every advantage of them and kill all he could, asleep, awake or any other way, and was not afraid to tackle a camp of a dozen single-handed and usually killed them all by crawling among them, killing with a knife until the disturbance stirred them up, then finish with two pistols as he was ambidextrous and seldom missed with either hand.

Buffalo Bill and Colonel Burke knew him well and told me in Atlanta some years ago that he was one of the old timers and — in a hand-to-hand Indian fight.

NOT being a Western man and a poor judge of such matters, I would not be a judge, but to me Captain Drannan rang true and had all the earmarks of an honest, rough, fearless man, of rather prepossessing appearance, gentle and careful in his manner with not the slightest taint of bluster. Personally I liked him and feel like I could vouch for any claim he has made. I think the reason he is not heard of is that he was overshadowed by Carson,

Bridger and other great scouts with whom he associated and he was too old to figure very prominently in the last of the Indian wars.

The information I give may throw a little light in favor of the old fellow; if so, I am glad, for his like has gone never to return. I might add that Drannan told me that so far as he knew he had no relatives, as he was born at sea coming from France, but if he did they were in Kentucky, where he left his little sister when he was a small boy, his parents having died, he running away to St. Louis and by accident meeting Kit Carson who in a way adopted him. Drannan always spoke of Colonel Carson as Uncle Kit.—JOHN H. POWELL, M.D.

THOUGH a changed press schedule makes it possible to alter this page, I'm leaving in it the following, written early in October, since it explains why our magazine, along with others, has not been able to adjust its contents at once to the ending of the war:

Sooner or later the day will come when *Adventure*, since it is made up several months in advance, will appear with its "help-win-the-war" departments and so on still in full blast after peace and victory have been won. That will look rather odd, but, since no man can know in advance just when the war will end, it can not be helped and we'll all be feeling too rejoiced to worry over a little thing like that. *Adventure's* little job is to keep hammering away at its little part in helping win the war, and it's better to seem to hammer too long rather than not hammer long enough. We Americans have learned by this time that the war isn't won until it is won and that it is foolish to relax any effort, great or small, until then.

WORD from a comrade at the front.

"Somewhere in France."

No doubt you will have forgotten me, seeing the length of time that has elapsed since I last sat down and dropped you a note, but I just thought I'd sit me down with my sack of "Bull," my book of "Riz-la" and my pen and let you know I am still alive and kicking.

IT HAS been some time since I lit on this side of the pond but if I remember rightly this is the first time I have essayed to let you know of my whereabouts. The idea entered my head when I strolled into a "Y. M. C. A." recently and picked up a late copy of *Adventure*, and believe me it's not often you get a chance at one; they don't last long enough. . . .

Have you been noticing what the "Yanks" have been doing to the "Heinies" hereabouts lately? I guess old Bill has changed his mind about Uncle Sam throwing a bluff. I'll admit we, as a nation, have the world stopped for throwing bluffs, but when it's necessary to back it up we have the goods.

By the way, I have been trying to locate a pal of

mine with the Canadians in various ways and as he is a reader of *Adventure* I think you can help me. His name is Clifford Todhunter and all I know of his whereabouts, or rather probable whereabouts, is that he left Philadelphia, April 19 or 20, 1917, for Montreal and enlisted in the Queen's Own Rifles. The exact number of his outfit I never knew.

I am now the Gas N. C. O. of our outfit and, believe me, it sure is interesting work. The folks at home and even the majority of the soldiers on this side do not realize the German High Command's dastardly crime of introducing the use of gas in civilized warfare.—Sergeant WM. A. FULMER, 112751, A. E. F.

WHEN we first read Charles Beadle's novelette that appears in this issue *Hayes* seemed such an exaggerated type of American that we wrote Mr. Beadle asking whether *Hayes'* extreme line of talk hadn't better be toned down a bit. He replied that *Hayes* really happened, that he was drawn from life. And yet, to many Americans, he will seem as exaggerated as he did to us in the office, so we're just playing safe by stating the fact that Mr. Beadle, an Englishman living in this country, didn't think he was drawing a typical American but knew he was drawing a particular and actual one.

It's the old business of truth being stranger than fiction. Many a story is rejected because, though really true, to the average reader it would seem more incredible than the wildest fiction.

WORD from comrade W. P. Jensen, who has been up against a "tin fish" and other things with a kick in them. I'd call this comrade a glutton for adventure.

Boston.

I started to go to sea in the year 1911 and the lure of the ocean has caught me for, as Tennyson says: "Only those who brave its danger, comprehend its mystery."

MY FIRST adventure was in Chile in 1913, when I and two other sailors got robbed by two bandits. They held us up with a gun and cleaned us out for everything we possessed; that was between Coquimbo and Guayacan. The ship was laying in Guayacan. By the way, two men died of beriberi; round the Horn, we lost another man from the gallant yard. In 1914 was in a mutiny; the less said about it the better.

IN 1916 was on the Russian Finn four-masted barque *Marborough Hill*. She was chased by a sub two hundred miles off the English coast. He hailed us in the morning and we hove to, the sub gave a signal to abandon ship and we lowered away our lee life-boat, but a heavy sea caught it and broke it up, whereby we lost two men and three wounded and fractured. The sub signaled us to make a raft and get away in that. We were loaded

with lumber from Pensacola, Florida, so we had plenty to make it of.

The captain called all hands aft and said that it was no other chance to reach the shore than run for it. There was running a heavy sea and blowing a gale. Then we was send up two man in each top to loosen the sail or rather to cut the gaskets away, and the other was standing on the deck and hoisting away at once. The sub got not a single shot home, but we got a lot of damage from the heavy sea in which the sub could not ketch up with us and we reached Liverpool in safety.

ON the twelfth of January I foundered in the British schooner *Meyric* of Beauamaris in a cyclone off the North African coast. We went out of Cadiz with a load of salt bound for Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. Two days out that got calm and about dinner, when I had watch below, I got thrown off my feet when the skip keeled over for a terrific wind-gust and we heard a crash and down came the gaff off the mainsail. After that we saw everything disappearing bit for bit, masts, bowsprit and all. The seas were washing over the deck with a terrific force and succeeded in pounding the lifeboat that was lashed on the mainhatch to pieces. These pieces floated around and cut a hole in the ———(?). This got bigger and bigger during the night and was impossible to get to for the seas were pounding us about the deck from one side to another.

At last we saw the ship would sink and we abandoned her and hung on for four hours where one man was terribly mauled and slashed of the sea. At last in the morning we saw a steamer bearing down. Later showed to be the *Panachi Vagliano*. There had been heavy damage during the cyclone. He launched his boat with big efforts and succeeded in rescuing us, but the sea was too heavy for them to run the boat alongside so we were hauled on board by lines and the boat set adrift.

I got landed in Gibraltar, went in an English ship, witnessed air-raids in Salonika and London, bombardment in Dunkirk.

GOT sunk by a sub the eighteenth of December, forty-two miles off the Irish coast in the Swedish barque *Bellville* of Landskrona. The sub fired first a torpedo, then went under the bottom. Then he came to the surface and ordered us to stop, what we did, and he came on board and removed all brass, like bells, and even the wheel he took with him that was brass bound and blowed us up. That journey in the boat was not at all very comfortable for that was very cold and the sailors had saved three cases of whiskey so they did not know what they was doing. Some wanted to go to France, others to England, then there was a fight and at last everybody but me reached Konigbeg Lightship in the Irish sea from which we was taken off by a submarine chaser. They landed us in Waterford. From Ireland we proceeded to Hull for going to Sweden; went out from there and got sunk by gunfire of two German cruisers and returned back to Hull and now I am over here and expect to go over again shortly.—W. P. JENSEN.

HE DID what, so far as I know, has been done only once before, and that several hundred years ago—sail a small boat single-handed over the seven hundred miles be-

tween New York and Bermuda. Our comrade, Captain A. E. Dingle, of our writers' brigade and "Ask Adventure." But he and his dog and his twenty-eight-foot sloop *Gauntlet* barely got through. A storm and a hurricane gave them twenty-six days of it, pretty well smashed up the boat, ruined instruments and supplies and left them for days without water.

I read the account of it in Bermuda papers and the tale is a dramatic one. Perhaps we can get him to tell us something about it.

SOME time ago one of our comrades at the front quoted a few lines of poetry and asked the Camp-Fire to give him the poem's name and the place where it first appeared. Responses have poured in for months, giving the poem in full, but no one could remember where it had first been published and I did not feel warranted in reprinting it without the consent of the original publisher. Yet that poem had made so remarkable an impression that many men all over the country had memorized it word for word. Truly a splendid tribute and proof enough for anybody that this poem should be passed on to as many as possible.

At last one of you "thought it had appeared in *Collier's*" and later another of you was sure of it and knew the year approximately. So I wrote to *Collier's* and they kindly sent me the full and correct text so that I could pass it on to you. It appeared on the inside back cover of their issue of August 3, 1912, and they as well as the author have placed many of us in debt for lines that live so strongly in the hearts of men.

THE DOWN-AND-OUT

by CLARENCE LEONARD HAY

SO, SON, you've come to the tropics, heard all that you had to do
Was to sit in the shade in a coconut glade, while the dollars rolled in to you?
They gave you that at the Bureau, you got the statistics straight?
Well, hear what it did to another kid before you decide your fate.
You don't go down with a short, hard fall; you just sort of shuffle along,
And lighten your load of the moral code till you can't tell the right from the wrong.
I started off to be honest, with everything on the square,
But a man can't fool with the golden rule in a crowd that don't play fair.

It's a choice of riding a dirty race or of being an
also ran.
My only hope was to sneak and dope the horse of the
other man.
I pulled a deal at Guayaquil, in an Inca silver
mine,
And before they found 'twas salted ground I was
safe in the Argentine;
I made short weight on the River Plate when run-
ning a freighter there,
And cracked a crib on a rich estate without ever
turning a hair;
But the thing that'll double-bar my soul when it
flaps at heaven's doors
Was peddling booze to the Santa Cruz, and Win-
chester forty-fours.
Made unafraid by my kindly aid, the drunk crazed
brutes came down
And left in a quivering, blazing mass a flourishing
border town.
I was then in charge of a smuggler's barge on the
coast of Yucatan,
But she sank to hell off Cozumel one night in a
hurricane.
I got to shore on a broken oar in the filthy, shrieking
dark,
With the other two of the good ship's crew con-
verted into shark.
From a limestone cliff I flagged a skiff with a salt-
soaked pair of jeans,
And worked my way (for I couldn't pay) on a fruiter
to New Orleans.

It's a kind of a habit, the tropics, that gets you, worse
than rum;
You get away, and you swear you'll stay, but it calls,
and back you come.
Six short months went by before I was back there on
the job,
Running a war in Salvador with a black-faced, bare-
foot mob.
It was General Santiago Hicks at the head of a grand
revolt,
And my only friend from start to end was a punish-
ing Army Colt.
I might have been Presidente now, a prosperous man
of means,
But a gunboat came and blocked my game with a
hundred and ten marines.
So I awoke from my dream dead broke, then drifted
from bad to worse,
And sank as low as a man can go who walks with an
empty purse.
But stars, they say, appear by day when you're
down in a deep, black pit.
My Lucky Star found me that way when I was
about to quit,
In a fiery-hot, flea-ridden cot, I was down with the
Yellow Jack,
Alone in the Bush and all but dead; She found me
and nursed me back,
She came like the Miracle Man of old and opened
my bad, blind eyes,
And upon me shone a clear new dawn as I turned my
head to the skies.
There was pride and grace in her brown young face,
for hers was the blood of kings;
In her eyes flashed the glory of empires gone and
the secret of world-old things.
We were spliced in a Yankee meetinghouse on the
land of your Uncle Sam,

And I drew my pay from the U. S. A., for I worked
at the Gatun Dam.
Mind you, I take no credit for coming back to my
own,
Though I walked again with honest men, I couldn't
have done it alone.
Then the devil sent his right-hand man—I might
have suspected he would—
And he took her life with a long thin knife because
she was straight and good.

Within me died hope, honor, pride, and all but a
primitive will
To hound him down on his blood-red trail, and
find—and kill—and kill!
Through logwood swamps and chicle camps I hunted
him many a moon,
Then found my man in a long pit pan at the edge of
a blue lagoon.
The chase was o'er at the farther shore; it ended a
two years' quest,
And I left him there with an empty stare and a
"John Crow" on his chest.

You see those punctures on my arm; you'd like to
know what they mean?
Those marks were left by the fingers deft of my
trained nurse, Miss Morphine.
Perhaps you think that's worse than drink—it's
possible, too, you're right;
At least it drives away the Things that come and
stare in the night.
There's a homestead down in an old Maine town
with lilacs round the gate,
And the Northers whisper: "It might have been,"
but the truth has come too late.
They say they give me a month to live—a month or
a year's the same;
I haven't the heart to play my part at the end of a
losing game.
For whenever you play, whatever the way, for
stakes that are big or small,
The claws of the tropics will gather your pile, and
the dealer gets it all!
—Reprinted by courtesy of *Collier's*.

YOU may remember that Samuel Alex-
ander White's novelette, "The Wave-
Bound," brought us a letter from Captain
James Moorhead who had been wrecked
on the Magdalen Islands, and later a letter
from E. J. O'Brien, about his own experience
on the scene of the story. Here is a further
letter from Captain Moorhead:

New York.

I have read with much interest Mr. E. J. O'Brien's answer to my letter in "Camp-Fire" of recent date. Mr. O'Brien's article is very interesting, and although he agrees I must have had a very rough experience on the Magdalen Islands, he must have seen that part of the world in different light to what I did.

He says lots of people speak English there now, but I could find only the lighthouse-keeper at Fortune Bay, in my time. He also mentions three old ladies who kept an inn where I would have met with a hearty old Irish welcome. Perhaps Mr. O'Brien's experience in Amherst Island was at some

other part from where I landed, and I only wish I could have fallen in with these old ladies' inn, I would rather have enjoyed my visit instead of the suffering I had, which I shall never forget.

However, I have been delighted reading Mr. O'Brien's article. Would like to meet him sometime to talk over the Magdalen Islands.—JAMES MOORHEAD.

SOME years ago, perhaps five, one of you whom I had never met sent me several specimens of chalchihuitl, which has good ground for being considered the rediscovered sacred stone of the ancient Aztecs. One of these stones, a beautiful specimen showing a distinct and almost perfect representation of the sacred beetle, he asked me to keep for him until he called for it. The others, some of them showing the rising sun image, he gave to me.

So his stone went into our safe and has lain there for years with never a word from or of the man who sent it. It seemed to me I had better bring up the matter at Camp-Fire and ask for news of him. But this afternoon he walked into the office and I turned over his stone to him.

ALSO I listened to some interesting talk about chalchihuitl and other things. I asked him to write down some of it for the rest of you, some of the odd happenings connected with the efforts of various people to establish this gem on a commercial basis, but he felt that they sounded too much like fiction and too little like fact. I still hope, however, that he will "come across" and tell you the tale.

There are so many of you with wonderful tales to tell, and so few of you tell them. Some of you tell them to me personally but, when I ask them to pass it on to the Camp-Fire in general, they find this, that and the other reason for not doing it. Of course some are all or partly—well, exaggerated, but there are plenty more that are true. And very good listening. Isn't it only fair that those of you who have only sat and enjoyed the talks of other comrades should play the game fair and even and hold up their own end of the telling?

THE gentleman who wrote the following letter accusing us of using "paid propaganda in disguise" does not seem inclined to back himself up:

Of all the dishonest and underhanded methods employed by the insane and pestilential advocates of National Prohibition, otherwise National Insan-

ity, the use of the moving-picture screens and story magazines is the basest. This propaganda does not go after proselytes by showing even a reasonable view of the worse side. The picture-shows bought for this work deceive poor people, to begin with, who have paid their hard-earned money for entertainment and remain to have their prejudices and passions played upon by harrowing showings of things on the order of ten-nights-in-a-barroom, or some obsolete or imaginary happenings incident to the development of the Western mining-fields.

The *Adventure* was a good magazine; I have bought and read it for its entertainment in the State of — and surrounding territory for many years, during travels annually amounting to about twenty-five thousand miles. But when you take in such slush as now offered by the Pinkertons, paid propaganda in disguise, as the "White Indians" appears to me in the June issue, my connection with you ends, and I shall do as much against the *Adventure* and every other such poisonous propaganda in hiding, as I have formerly done for them.

"The White Indians" is a foolish and preposterous story, of course, but it is no more so than the pictured failings of the *Rollin* of the story in the matter of drink. As a young man I drank everything there is that is good to drink, and quit in the midst of plenty during a Christmas week, twelve years ago. My stop was absolute, and final. And I know hundreds of similar cases, not necessarily involving unusually strong wills. Alcohol is not a disease. It is a blessing of the Creator, sometimes misused as is every other gift of God. Let some one tell of the happiness it brings, and the comfort it gives. No one is ever allowed to tell that side, these days of Pharisees and hypocrites.— — —

In reply I wrote, among other things:

You have accused this magazine of accepting disguised paid propaganda for publication as fiction. That is not true and you owe us an apology. What I want to know is, are you the kind of man who makes wild charges of dishonorable things without being able to back them up? If not, then offer reasonable proof of what you've said.

I'm quite willing to submit this case to our readers. Have you backbone enough to let me publish your letter over your name in Camp-Fire? You did not attach your signature to the letter, but merely typed the name — at the end of it. Please stand right up to the mark in your reply and affix your signature to what you say, particularly if you are game enough to give me permission to publish this letter in the magazine. I shall, of course, not publish your letter in the magazine until I have obtained consent from the Pinkertons, since their personal honor is involved in the matter.

It's been considerably over a month and he's not offered any proof, reasonable or otherwise. Nor has he had backbone enough to consent to presenting his case to you over his own name. He has not been game enough even to reply.

His charge is both false and ridiculous and the incident would be only amusing but for the fact that this kind of person is

dangerous and contemptible as well as silly. If a fellow wants to accuse a man—and, still more, a woman—of something dishonorable he ought to have some pretty solid proof before he talks, ought to be ready to back up his charges with that proof, ought to sign his name with his own hand instead of a type-writer, ought to be willing to submit the case over his own name to the judgment of those in whose eyes he tries to blacken his victims' reputation. Bah! The Camp-Fire, as far as my dealings with them are concerned, may not all be ladylike and pretty-mannered, but they're real people who, if they hit you at all, hit you in the face, not in the back with a rock thrown from a distant thicket. I'm glad this chap is no longer to be among us.

Here is the Pinkertons' reply to his silly charge. And an extract out of a letter from Mr. Pinkerton to me. As to this story's being "preposterous," you will remember that a number of you have written in giving other examples of the same well-established disease upon which the story hangs.

Denver, Colorado.

"The White Indians" was written as any piece of fiction is written, was offered for sale in the same way, and was paid for by *Adventure* only. Never in our lives has either of us ever had any connection with, communication from, or arrangement with, any temperance or prohibition organization. We have never received a cent from or contributed money to such an organization. We have no desire to contribute to prohibition propaganda and have never done so in any way. The question of alcoholism was used in "The White Indians" because we needed certain situations and elements in the story. That it might be construed as an argument against alcohol we never even considered until we received a copy of Mr. —'s letter. We did not, moreover, garble facts for the sake of the story. Alcoholism is recognized as a disease by members of the medical profession who know. Jack London, who certainly knew what booze does to a man, in "John Barleycorn" classified all men as alcoholic and non-alcoholic. Science is back of him, and science is knowledge, not a personal opinion stated fanatically over a type-written signature.—KATHRENE GEDNEY PINKERTON, ROBERT E. PINKERTON.

Denver, Colorado.

DEAR MR. HOFFMAN:

Your letter, with a copy of that from —, just arrived. Mrs. Pinkerton says that if it will give the readers of *Adventure* as good a laugh as it gave us, to go ahead and print it, all of it.

SERIOUSLY, though, we think its publication would be really valuable. It is hard sometimes to understand how German propaganda could be circulated in this country, but when any one can read a letter like this it is clearly evident. It is this type of mind that is quick to seize upon anything and twist it into the grotesque opinions and stories

that are circulated continuously. "Vox Popping" is the favorite pastime of a certain mental class, and any one who reads the "Letters from the People" in daily newspapers knows the type. Facts, logic, science, laws, either of man or nature, go by the board. Nothing counts but prejudice, misinformation, fanaticism and a complete willingness to believe that which it is wished to believe.

You know them all—Tumulty shot as a spy, the five-dollar bill in the sweater, ground glass in food, the entire American Army drunk in France, Schwab keeping the war going to make money. I've been told all of them, one man bearing the Tumulty story direct, he declared, from a United States Senator. In denouncing these stories I have immediately classified myself as mentally lacking in the eyes of the tellers. I guess it's a hard game to beat, for the same reason that you can't make bread of Portland cement, no matter how much yeast you use. It just won't rise.

I THINK that I, too, have consumed about everything there is in the way of alcoholic beverages, and sometimes in considerable quantities, and I haven't quit yet, though I have happened to live in dry territory for the last two years and am beginning to forget what Scotch tastes like. But I have merely considered myself lucky. Jack London, you know, in "John Barleycorn," classified all men as alcoholic and non-alcoholic, and I happened to be a non-alcoholic. But I have friends who are the other sort, and I know that physicians treat alcoholism as a disease.—ROBERT E. PINKERTON.

NOW here is a curious letter received by Thomas S. Miller, of our writers' brigade and "Ask Adventure," and, following it, Mr. Miller's reply and a second and fuller letter from Mr. X. W. Among us there ought to be some who can piece out at least a part of the mystery. It may, of course, be a hoax, as Mr. Miller suggests, but, if so, it has become venerable with age and should be treated with respect. On the other hand it may be no hoax. I do not think Mr. X. W.'s sincerity is to be questioned and it doesn't seem likely that he is the victim of a joke. We all know what strange things can be found in bottles.

It is to be noted that in one copy of the inscription as sent by Mr. X. W. the seventh word, "E T," is present, while in his other version he omits it.

Mr. X. W., by the way, has given us his full name and address but asks that his name be withheld. Letters addressed to Mr. X. W., care *Adventure* will be forwarded. If any translations are received we hope comrade X. W. will let all Camp-Fire see them in return for help from some of its members.

Springhill, Nova Scotia.

Reading in *Adventure* of your familiarity with the African Coast and having been told that the

enclosed writing was a Spanish-Portuguese mongrel dialect, would you mind trying if you can translate it as I have sent it to various sources and haven't been able to get a full and complete translation yet.
—X. W.

VELET MANGE PAR
DIOS DET NORTE ET ELVENGE
PIROT BURE DESIMGILD
CAPITAN BLACKBURNE
MDCCCXIX

San Francisco, Cal.

DEAR SIR:— . . . I hated to be beaten by this thing. Unless some one is playing a hoax on you it must be a mixed dialect from Portuguese East Africa, for *velet* is used by the Boers for "will you." *Par dios* is Spanish—"By God." I submitted it to the professors of languages of two universities, to Spanish and Portuguese, to a man well versed in the lingo of the Belgian Congo, all without result. I do not recognize any West African dialects in it.

Perhaps if *Adventure* publishes this it may happen that, as the magazine goes into every corner of the world, some reader may be able to help you. A message that starts out, with "Will you, by God" looks as if it ought to be translated—that there is a despairing cry behind it.—T. S. MILLER.

Springhill, Nova Scotia.

I would be pleased to have *Adventure* publish that screed in "Camp-Fire," as it has been a puzzle to all whom I have referred it to. George Manion, who was one of De Wet's aids in the South-African War, was the first one to give me any idea of any translation. It has been in our family a good many years now. I will tell you its history. My uncle and his chum (sailors) were walking along the beach after a big storm and they had not been able to continue their voyage. His chum noticed a queer-looking object washing up and down on the beach and picked it up. It was an old-fashioned bottle—stoneware—and was all encrusted with marine growths and stuff. He threw it away and my uncle noticed it was corked and sealed or crusted over. He hit it on a rock and an old parchment paper fell out. On this paper is a chart of some region with anchorages, courses and land courses marked on it, and that writing, which must be the key to it. My uncle didn't have any education and was not able to find any means of translation, so it has never been solved.

I do not wish my name published. If any of our comrades can decipher it they could forward their version to *Adventure* to be forwarded to me, could they not?—X. W.

DO YOU think our "melting-pot" melts? Or do you think we've been getting millions of immigrants who haven't been so thoroughly Americanized as they should be? If it doesn't melt, what's the trouble with it? You're an American; it's up to you to know whether we're letting millions of people into America who don't become Americans at all or become Americans in too small a degree. If we are, it's up to you, an American, to find out how and why it happens and how to correct this grave evil.

What proportion of our total population is foreign-born? What proportion of our total number of actual citizens? What proportion is born of foreign parents? Probably you have no idea. But you ought to have.

To what extent are they really Americanized? There is a lot for all of us to learn by talking personally to the foreign-born American citizens with whom we come into contact. Of all nations. Try asking them some of these questions: Why did they come to America? What did they expect? Did they find it? Did we treat them well and fairly? Do they consider us good citizens? To what extent did we help them to become Americanized?

Get honest answers to those questions from a number of naturalized citizens from various other countries. If you do, you'll have a whole lot to think about.

Annual Vote

LAST chance to vote on the ten best stories published in *Adventure* during 1918. This annual vote by our readers helps us get into the magazine the kinds of story they want.

Voting is simple and easy. On any sheet of paper write your list of ten stories (giving author's names), numbering them in order of preference. If you like, add as many as ten more stories by way of second choice or complimentary mention. Add your name and address. That's all.

Any one can vote provided he has read at least *seven* of the issues, for 1918 (First January, 1918, to Mid-December, 1918, inclusive). Serials, novels, novelettes, short stories, and articles all rank alike and may be voted for. Poems and "Camp-Fire" are barred.

A serial that laps over from 1917 or into 1919 may also be included in the vote. The same author may appear in the list as many times as you please. No votes will be counted if they reach us later than December 31, 1918, though allowance will be made for those writing from long distances, particularly the war-front. A list of the winners will be published in a subsequent issue, as was done last year.

Don't let stories in the later issues overshadow those earlier in the year merely because you read the former later and have them more vividly in your mind. And

don't let the mere length of a serial, novel or novelette outweigh the value of the shorter stories.

And this year we're adding a new feature to our voting. As in past years, we're leaving "Camp-Fire" and other departments out of the regular vote. But it will be interesting to find out just what relative values are assigned to these departments by our readers in general. So, in addition to the regular vote, we add a special vote. Call the total value of an average issue one hundred per cent., including both fiction and departments; then write down after each of the following items the proportion of value each of them seems to you to deserve:

Stories (all together)
Poetry (all together)
Camp-Fire
Identification Cards
Fighting the Hun Web
Looking Ahead
Ask Adventure
How to Help Win the War
Lost Trails
Letter-Friends

The total for the list should, of course, be one hundred per cent.

Of course, "Fighting the Hun Web" and "Looking Ahead" are not really under way yet, so perhaps in these two cases we'd better make some allowance.

SCALPING. How often did the victim survive the operation? Here is another item to add to the information already sent in, taken from a letter one of you in the Aircraft Division wrote to Hugh Pendexter in connection with his stories of the American Indians.

Lancaster, Pa.

Mother knew a man who wore very little hair on his head. Indians scalped him when a child and left him for dead.

Another child, a girl baby, of the same family, while lying in her cradle (by the way, the cradle was a large basket, much like a clothes-basket) smiled and put up her tiny hands to the Indian who reached for her to knock her brains out, and that Indian let her go without injury, nor would he let the two Indians with him touch the child.

METAL identification cards, 25 cents. See page 185. Can not give same number on metal as on old card. Holders of old cards can remain registered under both cards if desired.

BY A fortunate change in the printing schedule, our magazine is now not forced to make up quite so far in advance as formerly. It is particularly lucky because it gives opportunity to break into the pages of this issue, take out material that was valuable only while the war lasted and insert matter that bears upon conditions after Germany's signing of the armistice. "Fighting the Hun Web" and "Looking Ahead" are retained as departments, for they still serve useful purpose, but they are now turned upon the new conditions that have come with peace.

OUR magazine advocates the kind of patriotism that is active and alert in peace as well as in war. Our country has suffered because most of us let our patriotism sleep unless a war woke it up. "Looking Ahead" will be devoted to building up among us the kind of patriotism that stays awake.

The Hun has not stopped spinning his propaganda web. And he will go right on spinning it. So we will go right on exposing it in "Fighting the Hun Web."

"How to Help Win the War," of course, is no longer needed. It has done good service, accomplished many practical results and receives its honorable discharge.

AT THIS writing, in November, the tide of world events flows too rapidly for comment made now to be read a month later and still be pertinent. But at least it will be pertinent then as now to say "Thank God, the war is over!"

Many of us are at least half regretful that German soil has not been devastated as the Germans devastated the soils of other countries. We wanted to see our armed forces tramping the streets of Berlin in victory, wanted ruined German cities and countrysides to teach the Germans what war really is and give them a wholesome dread of it in future. But it would have cost us many more lives to attain this. The war has already numbered its 10,000,000. Also, because we are not Huns ourselves, we can not adopt Hun methods of victory. We must make the world safe by whatever severity may be necessary, but God knows there is room for much severity without sinking to the Hun level of brutishness. The armistice seems to ensure us. May peace terms keep the world equally safe.

AND now our boys will be coming back to us. You who have fought at the front for your country and your people can not have given so much without having got much in return. You come back with broader vision and understanding. You have been living and doing things bigger than personal things. Even we who worked at home have gained broader vision.

With our broader vision, what are you

and we going to do now that the war is over? Just slip back into the old blind, selfish rut of seeking personal gain and advantage? Or have we all grown big enough to see a little more clearly man's need of man? That democracy and brotherhood are not won by a single great effort, but by a life-long effort? That allegiance is to the *people*, to humanity, and to *all* the people, not to *any* class or part of them?—A. S. H.



LOOKING AHEAD

The Future of the American People is in their
Own Hands. The Future is Decided
by the Present.

THIS department was started to help awaken Americans to the need of considering in advance the problems that were bound to confront us as soon as the war ended. But now those problems are upon us. There is no longer time to consider them in advance. America at the end of 1918 finds herself as unprepared for peace as she was unprepared for war in April, 1917. We must again pay the penalty of lack of foresight, again act with haste and waste.

The double lesson is a costly one. Let us profit by it. From now on let us do our part toward rousing Americans to the need of looking ahead.

THESE months and years following the war have only begun to unfold to us the many changes and problems in store for a world that has been shaken to its foundations. We are living quick history. Old institutions have been crashing down; new ones arise. Old customs pass, new opinions gain strength. The war has turned a smooth flowing stream into a swift torrent swirled by many currents.

We can not afford to let ourselves drift on whatever chance currents may catch us up. It is not a time for treading water, but for swimming. And only a fool swims aimlessly.

We must look ahead.

AND we must do so in the broader sense. It is the main stream we must consider, not this, that or the other swirl or current by itself.

The main problem is not capital vs. labor, or free trade vs. protection, or this or that particular issue. The main problem is the general drift of the nation.

What is that general drift? Do we know? What do we want it to be? Do we know?

Most of us don't. Not clearly, definitely and in full. We have our opinions, but, when we analyze

them carefully, nine times out of ten we find that after all they pertain to only one of the minor currents, not to the main stream.

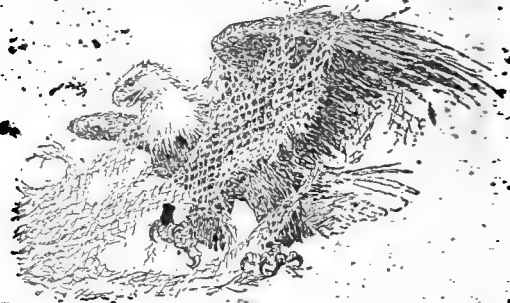
OR PERHAPS we have observed more broadly and realize at least vaguely that the main stream is democracy, democracy flowing hurriedly with many swirls and eddies and back currents, toward a fuller realization of itself. Yes, but what *is* democracy? And what is this fuller realization it seeks? Most of us are not very sure and definite on these points either.

Not know what democracy is? No, the chances are 999 out of 1,000 that you don't. Of course you can give a crude definition of it and can reel off some glib phrases like "by, of and for the people." But can you reduce it to its bare fundamentals so definitely that you can apply those fundamentals as test and measure of every concrete problem and issue, great or small, that can arise in a nation's life or in an individual's relations to that life? No! It's 999 to 1 that you can not. And if you can not, you don't know what democracy means.

IT'S time you learned—you, I and every other American. What hope has democracy if we upon whom it depends do not even know its real meaning? What hope for us the swimmers if we flounder in the eddies and cross currents without even knowing what the main stream is or where it came from or whither it is going?

It's time we learned. For our own sakes, for our nation's sake, for the world's sake. And in this department, if you will stand with me, we will take up the task of learning. For the present we will call it "Looking Ahead," for it is that. Later we will give it a name more definitely fitted to its purpose.—A. S. H.

FIGHTING THE HUN WEB



A department devoted to throwing light upon the actual workings of the subtle German propaganda, *even after the war*, in the United States, Canada and throughout the world. Every time you discover one of the strands of this web, tell the rest of us about it, briefly but clearly. Once seen, it loses its dangerous power.

THE war is over. But what the Hun could not do by force of arms he will try to accomplish through the ways of peace. He is beaten and he squeals for the mercy he himself never gave to any one, boasting that mercy was weakness. Now he moans for sympathy, begs for help, pleads for gentleness; food, help, he who for more than four years has shown no gentleness to any victim, has starved his prisoners, murdered, raped, mutilated and plundered instead of helping. Now, when he has become the suffering one, he squeals and blubbers like the bully and coward that he is.

BUT he is something more than a, bully and coward. We can not forget that he is a brute beast, but, unless we are careful, we may forget that he is a *cunning* brute. We are breaking his naval and military strength, weakening his economic strength toward the safety-point, but we are not taking from him his strongest and most dangerous weapon—*propaganda*. Propaganda, the subtlest molder and poisoner of nations and individuals, brought by the Hun to such a pitch of perfection as the world has never known before.

He still has this weapon. He is still using it and will go on using it. The German people have from childhood been systematically trained to evil and to the cold-blooded methods of a snake. A revolution can not change their *character*.

THEIR other weapons are gone. They will use this one all the more. Guard against it. Watch for its workings. In Germany, in this country, in Latin America, Japan, all over the world. Watch it working to get economic advantages, to create bad feeling between allies, to poison in this way and in that, and always for the ultimate advantage of the Hun.

The end of the war does not end the usefulness of this department. Probably it will not appear in every issue, but from time to time it will publish, and thereby help make futile, whatever strands of the Hun web any of us discover. Be on your guard and do your duty to civilization by reporting every strand you find.

Most of the reports originally placed on this page have been taken out because of the war's ending, but the two following still hold good.—A. S. H.

HERE'S a news report from Amsterdam about Hun activity that needs no label as propaganda, but shows the thoroughness of their methods and how far they look ahead:

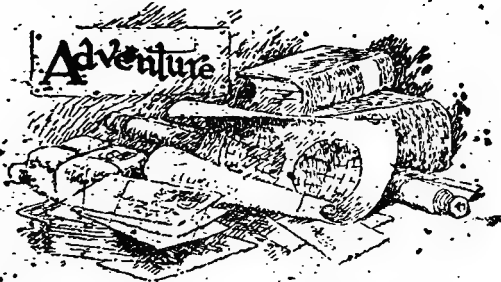
There has been formed in Munich, Bavaria, under influential auspices, the German-Mexican Society; the program of which will be "to foster cultural and economic relations with Mexico, which country always has shown cordial sympathies toward Germany."

It is purposed by the society to issue a periodical under the title of *Mexikanische Rundschau* and to facilitate the entry of Mexican students into German high schools.

WATCH the Hun propaganda subtly at work on our relations with the South and Central American nations, missing no chance to build up friction, suspicion, dislike, personal ill-feeling.

One of its subtle methods is to encourage us in the idea that we are a superior race having little in common with the Latin-American peoples. The Hun works busily to make us believe that the Latin-Americans produce nothing but revolutions. Having thus made us scornful and indifferent, the Hun steals a march on us and quietly slips into Latin America, colonizes everywhere he can, gets his hold on all the trade he can and—works his propaganda from that end too, busily making the Latin-Americans his dupes, just as he makes us his dupes, by building up suspicion and dislike. Then he gets more trade, does more colonizing, gets more hold in finance, politics and every-day life.

The way to beat the Hun at this game, as in most of his games, is to get the real facts instead of the carefully prepared misinformation he gives us. Any one who finds out just how big and valuable a part Latin-America plays in the world's economic, political and social progress will not be one of the Hun's "fall guys." This country needs the full friendship and cooperation of Latin-America. In the future we're going to need it still more. Germany knows that, so she spares no effort to prevent our getting it.—A. S. H.



VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you read and observe the simple rules, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address; (2) name and address of party to be notified; (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free, provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application. We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For 25 cents we will send the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Post-paid. This is cost.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

WILL SELL: February, 1917 to present issue, complete. Forty numbers, containing 19 complete novels and 13 complete serials. All brand-new. Total cost \$7.05. Will sell for \$5.00 complete or 15 cents each.—A. B. HERBERT, care of *Adventure*.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it with the manuscript; do not send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask *Adventure*" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Letter-Friends Back Home

A Free Service Department for American, Canadian, and Other Allied Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Others in Camp, at the Front or in Hospital

Any one in the United States or Allied service who wishes to brighten the time with letters from "back home" or wherever else this magazine circulates; and with the personal touch and interest of hitherto unknown friends, can secure these letters and these friends by sending us his name and military address to be published once in this department as soon as censorship of soldiers' foreign addresses permits. In the meantime his address can be printed as "care *Adventure*," letters to be forwarded at once by us to the military address he gives us in confidence. Among our readers of both sexes, all classes and from all parts of the world, he is likely to gain a number of friendly, personal correspondents. He is free to answer only such as he is comfortably able to answer under the conditions that surround him, and it is even suggested that the number of correspondents for any one man be determined by the needs of his comrades as well as by his own.

This magazine, of course, assumes no responsibility other than the publishing of these names and addresses as its space will permit. Experience has shown that the service offered is a very real and needed one, and all not themselves in service are asked to do their part in making the daily life of those who have fought in our defense brighter and pleasanter through personal friendships across the intervening miles and by whatever personal, human kindnesses such friendships may suggest.

When giving your military address make it as permanent as one as possible.

EMILE RAGOLE
HENRY BERGHIMANS
JOHN WOUTERS
AUGUST REYNAERTS

All belonging to Z32, 11th Company, Belgian Field Army, France.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1302 N. St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougall Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

American Defense Society, Inc.—An organization working systematically for real Americanism and furthering the winning of the war by watchfulness and effort at the right points.—Address 44 East 23d St., New York City.

(See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask *Adventure*.")

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure Magazine* by Our Staff of Experts.



QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments

subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable in this country for American stamps.
2. Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.
3. No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.
4. Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.
5. Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.

1. Islands and Coasts

CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1

B. W. BRINTNALL, 5527 Thirty-third Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. The Sea Part 2

CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men, local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brintnall.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1

RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, freshwater pearls, herbs, and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2

HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3

DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine.

Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Western U. S. Part 1

E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

8. Western U. S. Part 2

CAPT. ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, Yankton, S. Dak. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially early history of Missouri Valley.

9. Western U. S. Part 3 and Mexico Part 1

J. W. ROBERTSON, 912 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

10. Mexico Part 2

WILLIAM BROCKWAY, Oriental Park, Marianao, Cuba. Covering Central and Southern Mexico below a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. History, geography, customs, government, animals, minerals, products and industries.

11. North American Snow Countries Part 1

ROBERT E. PINKERTON, 5036 Utica Ave., Denver, Colo. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. Ry. Canoes and snowshoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

12. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 2

S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. E. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec

★(Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps, NOT attached)

Return postage not required from U. S. or Canadian soldiers, sailors, or marines in service outside the U. S., its possessions, or Canada.

and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CARTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering Southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Clear Lake, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

15. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

16. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, Honolulu, T. H. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

17. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

18. The Balkans
ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH, 907 Sterling Place, Brooklyn, N. Y. Covering Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey (in Europe); travel, sport, customs, language, local conditions, markets, industries.

19. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; travel, trading, traveling.

20. Japan and Korea
(Editor to be appointed.) Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios. (Mr. Ritchie, the former editor of this section, is now in France. His section is accordingly in abeyance until we find a suitable successor.)

21. Russia and Eastern Siberia
CAPTAIN A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Quartermaster, U. S. Troops, Mercedes, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

22. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Eagle Bird Mine, Washington, Nevada Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba,

★ (Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached)

The following "Ask Adventure" editors are now serving in our military forces. We hope you will be patient if their answers are at times delayed: Capt.-Adj. Joseph Mills Hanson; Capt. A. M. Lochwitzky.

Hunting in West Africa

GOING after game in Nigeria is a good deal like hunting in a zoo, to judge by the subjoined brace of letters. Good hunting to these *Mougdis* of the West:

Question:—"A friend of mine is desirous of taking a hunting-trip to western Africa, where he can bag the usual big game found in that country, the expedition to consist of four white men to last six months. As I have traveled in the South, but a good many years ago, he asks me to give him the cost of such an expedition and I am unable to do so.

"Will you be so kind as to outline what a trip of this sort would cost at the present time? The expenses to include the necessary *safari*, with porters, guides, provisions and the usual impedimenta required for such an expedition. Is it possible to outfit in Africa or in the States? What would be the cost of the above expedition for a six months' tour, beginning with the landing of the party at whatever port would be most convenient for the trip?

Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

23. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

24. ★ Africa Part 3 Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game; wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

25. Africa Part 4 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda, and the Upper Congo.

CHARLES BEADLE, Care Authors' League of America, 33 West 42d St., New York. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

26. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

27. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, 1106 Van Nuys Building, Los Angeles, Cal. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba. Or J. V. Knight, Director, Republic of Cuba News Bureau, Woolworth Building, New York.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

"Are there any closed seasons for big game? What is the Government allowance or limit for the killing of game? The expedition referred to above is not only for the pleasure of the hunting-trip, but to secure natural-history specimens for a natural-history museum.

"I enclose a stamped envelope for the convenience of your reply, and in return will state that I am consul for Peru in Ohio, am familiar with Spanish America, speak the language, know the customs and hold myself at your service at any time."—DR. A. DE CLAIRMONT, Toledo, Ohio.

Answer, by Mr. Miller:—I will do the best I can with your inquiry, though the term western Africa covers too large an area for me to handle in a single letter. Still the best trip for a combined hunting and natural-history expedition would be Nigeria—Northern and Southern. From New York to Liverpool, thence per Elder-Dempster Line to Lagos, Gold Coast, or *via* the New York-Genoa Steamship Line to the Canaries, thence to Lagos would be best in these submarine days; then per Lagos-Northern Nigeria Railway to Zungeru, capital of Northern Nigeria.

Here your friend would have a wide latitude of choice and the sincere aid of the British officials. They would probably go through the Pagan Belt to Lake Chad, détour round to the Benue tributary to the Niger and canoe down to Southern Nigeria and the Delta country. This route would give them a variety of plains, mountains and jungle and a chance at lion, leopard, antelope, gazelle, rhinoceros, hippopotami, crocodiles, manatus (rather rare) and elephants, though an elephant license comes high—fifty pounds (\$250) for two elephants.

I am uncertain about closed seasons, but as the trip would have to be undertaken in the dry season—July to October—they must take their chance. There is no closed season for lion, leopard and such carnivorous beasts. Licenses run all the way from fifteen dollars to five hundred, according to number of guns and latitude of hunt.

When I was in the country, ten years ago, we had to deposit with Collector of Customs a certain sum as a guarantee against trading guns to natives. The deposit is returned when you leave the country, if you have the guns.

The Government maintains rest-houses along the more general trails for travelers, and the cantonment officer will provide carriers. Four men would require about thirty to forty men, according to the length of the trip and the local conditions, whether there is food in the land or if it has to be portered.

These carriers would not be hired for the six months, but only for short trips, travelers re-hiring in each district.

It is hard to estimate expenses. Your friends may be able to make a headquarters and run short trips from there with just a gun-bearer or two and half a dozen men. A shilling (twenty-five cents) a day pays for a carrier, and if a man is handy with the gun and not prejudiced against native food his expense should be less than hunting in the Rockies.

Many parts are unsettled and it may be necessary to take along native police, for which the Government makes a charge.

Outfitting: A tent that will stand up against a tornado is best gotten in the United States, and it is well to take along good shoes and saddles (by the way, a good mount can be bought in Northern Nigeria for thirty dollars but it would be hard to get saddles). The stores at Lagos and trading-posts on the Niger and Benue are well stocked and priced lower than at home in canned goods and the peculiar demands of the local white man's trade.

I can not estimate nearer than twenty per cent. of the total cost from the States and return of a six months' expedition for four men, so much depends on the men and their requirements, but an average figure for the four would be three thousand dollars, covering everything.

I would suggest reading, "On Horseback through Nigeria," J. D. Falconer; "In the Shadow of the Bush," P. A. Talbot; "Making Northern Nigeria," G. W. Orr.

Deck-Hand on Lake Freighter

HERE'S a chance to do your bit and at the same time get into a good game which will land you a big job eventually if you keep your wits about you:

Question:—"What are the chances of a young man sixteen years of age getting a job as deck-hand

on one of the lake freighters? Are there any places here in Detroit at which I could inquire for work? What is the usual pay and what is the work of a deck-hand?"—WRAY CRITTENDEN, Detroit, Michigan.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—Go to the captain of any steamer tied up at Detroit docks and he will take you on if there is a vacancy for you on board. Any sailor at the docks, any dockmaster, could tell you where to go for a job as deck-hand.

The work is scrubbing the decks, working at the ropes in making landings, painting hatches, helping load and unload the boat, running errands for mates and captain, and doing little odd jobs.

I don't know what the wage schedule is; probably one dollar a day up, and board. It is good, clean work, and if a boy keeps his head, studies the work, keeps track of things, he should shortly be promoted and become mate, and in a few years, captain. I knew a young man who had his ship as captain within ten years; he was hardly twenty-five when I met him.

The work is clean, not difficult, intensely interesting and good, honest work. You could go out for a trip or two, and find out whether you liked it or not. Would suggest that you find out what the requirements are for passing examinations for mate and then study up on the question on the quiet, when you are coming and going.

If you go to U. S. Lake Survey Office, Detroit, you might find a chance to get in on the Government service, which would be the best possible place for experience, under most favorable conditions. Go there and ask them about getting into the survey service—best lake work there is—and take anything they offer.

Radio Work in Latin America

OF course, this department is not an employment agency; but, as the rule on page 186 says—have you read those rules yet, by the way? If not, please do—we're glad to advise a man about work opportunities of an outdoor nature:

Question:—"Would like your advice on radio work in Central and South American countries. Am particularly interested in Brazil. By radio work I mean installation of apparatus, operation of the stations, or both, for the Government or private concerns, such as electrical companies, mining companies, etc.

"Radio is not a plaything any more, but is a reality, I know, as both my partner and I have been in the game since 1910 and not as amateurs, and if the private companies have trouble with land wires then radio is the only thing. My partner is with the United States Government, and I am in the Navy for the duration of the war. Just as soon as the war is over we want to line out.

"The reason that we are more interested in Brazil is because we have both been around there a couple of times and like the country, also Brazil has the worst radio service of any South American country. Between the both of us we have been in all of the countries south of the United States, and in 1914 and 1916 the radio service in Brazil was fierce.

"My partner and I have had experience with every

type of radio apparatus ever put out, including radio phone, and can install and work a radio phone or radio telegraph set any distance. Radio phone is practical but darn expensive. We talked over a radio phone from the P. P. I. E. to Seattle and San Diego. The set belonged to the company we were working for. Believe me we can deliver the goods and furnish any kind of recommendations desired.

"Will stop writing or you will begin to think that I hate myself. Would be very glad if you could furnish me any information, addresses or anything else on this subject. Please do not use my name in any way."

Answer, by Mr. Young:—I am sorry to advise that radio work is about the poorest occupation there is to follow in Central and South America, due to the extremely low wages paid the native operators, and it is with them that an American operator must compete in this line.

There are many better lines to follow in Brazil and with your knowledge of electricity you should be able to land something good when the war is over. The Light and Power Company in either Sao Paulo or Rio pay up to around three hundred dollars per month for the kind of position you would be likely to land.

I am attaching a short monograph written by myself concerning Central America.

Please write your congressman and request him to ask Mr. John Barrett, Director-General, Pan-American Union, Washington, D. C., to send you his free booklet entitled "Brazil." Yours with best wishes.

How to File

YOU don't have to be a lawyer in order to get a burglar-proof deed to one of Uncle Sam's homesteads. Your uncle requires you only to be a citizen in earnest:

Question:—"I am a reader of your magazine, *Adventure*, and glancing over the information it gives about various sports, and also about what chance a man may have out West:

"I would like you to give me as much information about the following as you can:

"What chance has a man with \$500 to homestead 160 acres. I have taken up a scientific course in agriculture at the Cornell University. I liked my work very much. My one ambition is to get out in the open, away from the crowded cities.

"In what State would you advise to homestead? How shall I go about it? How much does it cost to travel to the place which you might choose? Could I start arrangements now for homesteading next year?

"What would my large expenses be from the start if I wished to start to farm immediately, and also do a little ranching on the side?

Would it be possible to get started on \$500? If not how much will it take? Would you advise taking some one with me (say a cousin of mine about 35 years old) who has no money. Do you think it would be advisable?

"Will you give me as much information about homesteading as you can?"—LOUIS KAVALEK, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—A man with \$500 can take up a homestead easily enough, as the filing

fee is small. I advise you to write to the Department of the Interior at Washington, asking for Circular 484, which gives the vacant acreage in every county and its general character.

After getting this you can pick your State and county. Then get all the information you can from local sources and if you think you have hit the right county, go there, look the land over, pick out the township you favor most and send to the nearest land office one dollar and the number of the township, with the range number. The men in the office will furnish you with a map of that township with all previous filings marked on it. Then you examine the open land and choose your filing.

You are obliged to take oath that you have been all over the lot you file on and know its character. You can't file without it.

There are only two ways of selecting land for filing. This way or paying some other man for doing the hunting for you, then go to the tract he chooses and make a personal examination. Most of the professional locators are swindlers, showing a good tract and then giving the man who files a wrong description, so he files on some piece a mile or two from the one he has meant to get.

You can not start anything till you know where you want to file. The capital you mention would not go far in stocking a ranch and buying machinery, nor could you expect to get to farming at once after filing as there is always a lot of work to do on the land first.

Mineral and Oil Prospects of India

THE oil industry is dominated by Americans even in India; and where Americans go, there goes baseball. The game follows the Yanks:

Question:—"I am thirty-one years of age, a seafaring man by profession, and in excellent health. Have spent about three years in the tropics, and I also have about two years in the Canadian snow country.

"I am classed as a good shot with a high-powered rifle; have some experience with tropical game. I have a fair knowledge of placer mining, and a good working knowledge of oil.

"There are two of us, and we have about one thousand dollars between us, and willing to work at anything.

"We would feel very grateful to you for any information regarding the mineral and oil prospects of India, and also of the game."—FRANK R. SMITH, Camp Fremont, Palo Alto, Cal.

Answer, by Mr. McCreagh:—A treatise on the mineral and oil prospects of India is rather a large order. The mining resources of India include, as developed industries, salt and coal pretty widely distributed; gold in the southern Dekkan; oil, rubies, and jade in Burma; manganese and mica in Bengal; and tin, also in Burma. Other minerals which exist but have not been developed as yet in paying quantities are copper ore, alum, gypsum and plumbago.

You will see that in spite of the current belief as to its legendary wealth, which is really due to the accumulations of ages, India can not be said to be naturally rich in the more precious minerals.

I judge from your letter that you are particularly

HERROD, WILLIAM "BILL." Home in Lockport, N. Y. Last heard of him from Lockport in October of last year. Wrote he was starting for Alaska in the Spring. Is about 20 years old, 5 ft. 7 in. tall, weight 180 lbs. Has light hair and fair complexion. Write to your old pal, Bill. The one of the big fight on the *Minnesota* between Buffalo and Detroit.—Address **JOE M. H.**, care of *Adventure*.

LANGFORD, GEORGE WASHINGTON. Can any one give me any information as to his whereabouts?—Address **JOHN D. TOWNSEND**, 1006 East Duke, Hugo, Okla.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all un-found names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

SAYERS, ROBERT E. Age about 44 years; height about 6 feet; blue eyes and brown hair; weight about 170 pounds. Birthplace Berea, Ohio. Last seen in Denver, Colorado, about 12 years ago going to Frazer, Colorado, to work in lumber-camp. Please communicate with sister.—Address **MRS. MAGGIE THOLKE**, 2317 South 12th St., St. Louis, Mo.

INGE, JIM. Last heard of in California in 1917. Your old friend Tex, who was with you in Cottonwood and Jerome, Arizona, would like to hear from you.—Address **FRANK E. GREVE**, 822 A St., Tacoma, Wash.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

LAING, HARRY. Last heard of in Cincinnati, Ohio. Disappeared about ten or twelve years ago. Stopped writing home after three months, without any apparent reason. Any information concerning him would be highly appreciated by his family and his daughters, Anna and Lillie Laing.—Address **SAMUEL JAMES FULLWOOD**, New Concord, Ohio.

MEONIS, WM. J. Said to be a native of Richmond, Va. Last heard from about 1916 in Kalamazoo, Michigan, on a farm. Student in the I. S. C., Scranton, Pa. Mining engineer. Bob, your old chum of Detroit, Michigan, would like to hear from you. Any one knowing his present address, please notify.—Address **PRIVATE R. VICTOR SMALL**, C. A. M. C. Military Hospital, Whitby, Ontario, Canada.

FISHER, ELMER. Age 24, last heard from in Tula, Utah, 1915. Please inform your mother where you are.—Address **MRS. GEORGE CLEVER**, 250 Harrison St., Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio.

The following have been inquired for in full in either the Mid-December or First January issues of *Adventure*. They can get name and address of inquirer from this magazine.

AMARANTE, FRANCISCO DE PAULA; Barringer, Mrs. Lavina May; Chase, S.; Dempsey, Raymond S.; High, Charlie or Aubrey Godfrey; Judson, Robert A.; Lynch, Miss Barbara; Mierisch, Charles L.; Reichmeyer, John C.; Silk, William J.; Spelitt, L.; Whittington, Everett; Williams, Burton Albert.

MISCELLANEOUS—"Shun" Boys of the 213th A. S. Batt. C. E. F. American Legion who were at Camp Borden; Ontario, especially Joe Voger or George Zinkle; Anderson, William Hamilton or William Anderson.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan; Lee Hayes; Christian Baum; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; O. B. Franklin.

NUMBERS L. T. 284, C. 293, W. 311, W. 312, L. T. 343. Please send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you.—Address **J. E. Cox**, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD FIRST FEBRUARY ADVENTURE

Ten red-blooded, out-of-doors stories will come to you besides the three mentioned in the ad on page 2, with the First February number, in your hands on January 3d.

TENNESSEE HOLMAN, GENTLEMAN

In a mountain logging-camp you find him, this Tennessee gentleman—and also the lad who doubted him.

By Hapsburg Liebe

JUST THINKIN'

He is just thinkin' when he tells the tale of the Orphan Home, this old pioneer. Perhaps you'll be just thinkin' too.

By George L. Catton and Harry M. Moore

THE POISON DEVIL

A tale of the Borneo jungle and the strange death which spread through the natives.

By Gordon McCreagh

A GENTLED BURLEY

Some people never can see a joke. *Cripps*, for example, could not tolerate being spanked, so we have this story.

By Hugh Kennedy

THE BONE-BREAKER

Ye who appreciate the merits of a good fight, read this, see the Bone-Breaker pounce upon his latest victim—or intended victim.

By Charles M. Cosby

A REVIVING WIND

He is only a young lad with a brilliant future before him, but he has one weakness, gambling, so he decides to hide himself in Africa.

By Will Levington Comfort

THE KIDNAPERS

A story of the Indian-fighting days, and how two scouts planned a little job outside of soldiering.

By G. A. Wells

THE SEVEN DIAMOND RINGS

To sell them *Dan Farmer* comes to Savannah, but a man carrying diamond rings should never step into a fight.

By R. N. Wall

THE BROOCH OF TLAYA: Conclusion

In the final part of this stirring story of old-time Scotland, *Tlaya* and the *Red Swynie* tire of their pact and decide to arrange things to their own liking.

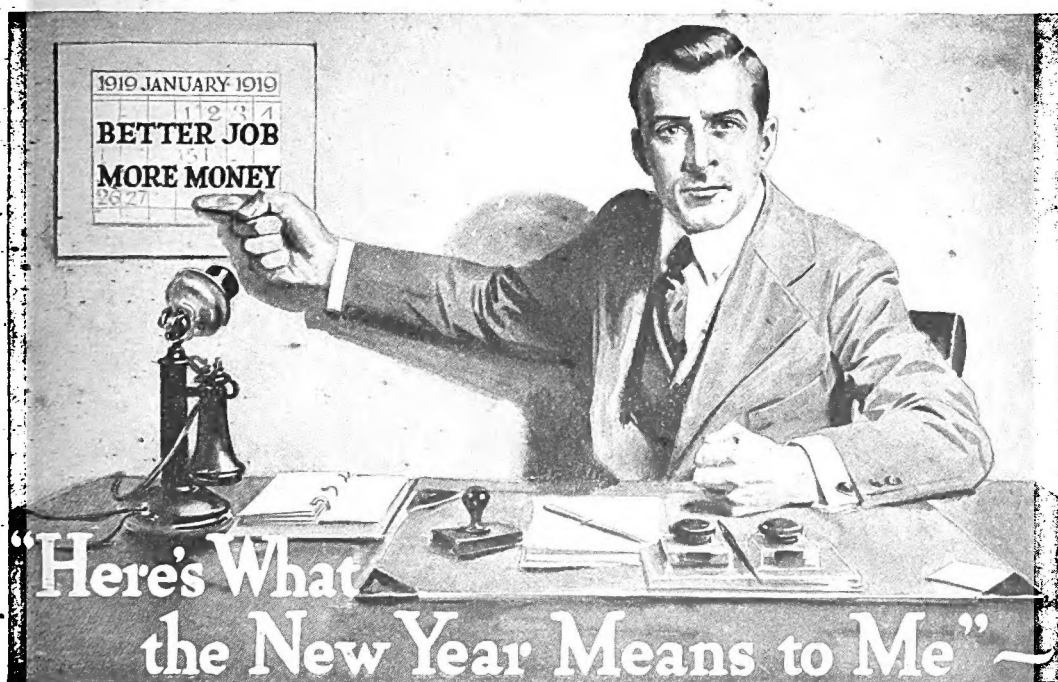
By Anne Throop Craig and Louise Rice

HOW PARADISE LOST

Football certainly takes Paradise and Piperock by storm—the game between the two towns is a thing you can't miss.

By W. C. Tuttle





"More money than I ever earned before!"

"A bigger, more responsible position in the work I like best!"

"The thrill of success, of knowing I'm getting ahead in the world—and all because I turned my spare time to profit!"

With the new year, thousands of men are receiving promotions and salary increases as a result of spare time study with the International Correspondence Schools. They looked ahead, they saw that in every line *trained* men are wanted and they grasped the opportunity to secure that training right at home in hours they had been wasting. Over two million men and women have prepared for advancement in the I. C. S. way in the last 27 years. Over 100,000 are getting ready for bigger jobs right now.

Let this new year mark the real starting point in *your* career. Wherever you live, whatever you do, the chance for bigger things awaits you. No matter what work you like best, what position you want, there is an I. C. S. Course that will get you ready for it.

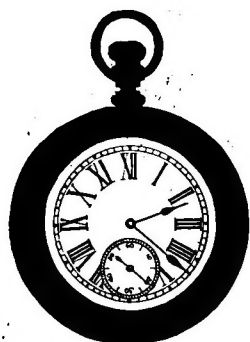
This *can* be the most important year of your life. Let the I. C. S. help you make it so. The way is easy. The time to start is *now*. And the first thing to do is to mark and mail this coupon.

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Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, before which I mark X.

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| ☐ ELECTRIC ENGINEER | ☐ SALESMANSHIP |
| ☐ Electric Lighting and Railways | ☐ ADVERTISING |
| ☐ Electric Wiring | ☐ Window Trimmer |
| ☐ Telegraph Engineer | ☐ Show Card Writer |
| ☐ Telephone Work | ☐ Sign Painter |
| ☐ MECHANICAL ENGINEER | ☐ Railroad Trainman |
| ☐ Mechanical Draftsman | ☐ ILLUSTRATING |
| ☐ Machine Shop Practice | ☐ Cartooning |
| ☐ Toolmaker | ☐ BOOKKEEPER |
| ☐ Gas Engine Operating | ☐ Stenographer and Typist |
| ☐ CIVIL ENGINEER | ☐ Cert. Public Accountant |
| ☐ Surveying and Mapping | ☐ TRAFFIC MANAGER |
| ☐ MINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER | ☐ Railway Accountant |
| ☐ STATIONARY ENGINEER | ☐ Commercial Law |
| ☐ Marine Engineer | ☐ GOOD ENGLISH |
| ☐ Ship Draftsman | ☐ Teacher |
| ☐ ARCHITECT | ☐ Common School Subjects |
| ☐ Contractor and Builder | ☐ Mathematics |
| ☐ Architectural Draftsman | ☐ CIVIL SERVICE |
| ☐ Concrete Builder | ☐ Railway Mail Clerk |
| ☐ Structural Engineer | ☐ AUTOMOBILE OPERATING |
| ☐ PLUMBING AND HEATING | ☐ Auto Repairing |
| ☐ Sheet Metal Worker | ☐ Navigation |
| ☐ Textile Overseer or Supt. | ☐ AGRICULTURE ☐ Spanish |
| ☐ CHEMIST | ☐ Poultry Raising ☐ French ☐ Italian |

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 Present Occupation _____
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4 a minute

Every minute of the year that the stores are open Delineator families buy four watches. Of the 12 million watches sold yearly (5 million jeweled, 7 million non-jeweled) Delineator families purchase three-quarters of a million at a cost of more than three million dollars. Every minute of the day the women in the million Delineator families are buying innumerable things for their households. Are you telling them about your product in

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